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N O T E S,  
CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,  
ON THE  
BOOK OF GENESIS;

DESIGNED AS A GENERAL HELP TO  
BIBLICAL READING AND INSTRUCTION.

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# THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

## VOL. II.

### CHAPTER XXII.

IF those portions of history are most replete with interest and instruction which exhibit to us illustrious characters in trying situations, having their virtues put to the severest test, yet holding fast their integrity, conquering difficulties, and rising superior to temptation by the power of moral principle, then the ensuing narrative of Abraham's last and greatest trial prefers the strongest claims to our attention. It is an event preeminently memorable in the life of the patriarch. Whatever signal instances of faith and obedience have hitherto distinguished his conduct, they are all eclipsed by that which we are now called to consider. At the very time when we are prompted to congratulate the happy sire, and flatter ourselves that his tribulations have an end; that the storms which ruffled the noon of life are blown over, and the evening of his age is becoming calm and serene, the sorest of his struggles yet awaits him. The loss of a beloved child would, under any circumstances, have been a grievous affliction; but in the present case he finds himself required to submit to a bereavement which threatened to extinguish the hopes of the world. Nor was this all. The fatal blow was to be struck with his own hand! And in this he was called to obey a mandate in which the divine counsel seemed so evidently to war with itself, that his bosom could not but be torn with a conflict of emotions, such as the mere grief of a father could never occasion. To a command which should *merely* put to the proof his paternal affection, he

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1.

could, no doubt, have submitted without hesitation; but when, to the eye of reason, he saw the *precept* arrayed against the *promise* of God, and an act enjoined directly at variance with all the attributes of a Being holy, just, and true, he could not but be conscious of an inward struggle, ineffably severe. But the faith which had triumphed before, triumphed now; and as he came forth from the terrible ordeal, like gold tried in the furnace, how pertinently may we conceive an approving God addressing him in the language of the poet:—

“All thy vexations  
Were but my trials of thy love: and thou  
Hast strangely stood the test.”

The command here given to the patriarch to sacrifice his only son has ever been so fruitful a theme of cavil with the enemies of revelation, that it will be proper, in the outset, to advert with some particularity to the objections usually urged against it. The command, it is said, is inconsistent with the attributes of a Being of perfect justice and goodness. But to this it may be replied, that the assertion rests upon no sufficient grounds. As God is the author and giver of life, he surely can, without the least shadow of injustice, take it away when and in what manner he pleases. It cannot be supposed that he conferred life either upon Abraham or Isaac, upon the terms of taking it away only in one certain manner, or in the way most agreeable to them. It was given in this, as in all other cases, under the ordinary reserve of his own indisputable right of resumption in any mode that

might seem to him best. There is undoubtedly something shocking in the idea of a parent's taking away the life of his own child ; but when this is done in obedience to an express command from a competent authority, then that which would otherwise be a sin becomes a duty, and whoever would impugn the act, must necessarily impugn the authority from which it proceeds. To human view it might appear a very barbarous deed in a father to order a son to be beaten to death with rods before his eyes ; yet the conduct of Junius Brutus, who passed this sentence upon his own children, is usually considered as having been fully justified by the circumstances which occasioned it. And did Abraham owe less obedience to God than Brutus to his country ? Indeed, had the command been actually executed, we should have been bound, by our antecedent knowledge of the perfections of the Deity, to regard it as wise, just, and good ; though we might not, from our limited powers, have been able to see the reason of it ; for a divine command necessarily supposes wisdom, justice, and goodness in the highest possible degree. But this was not the case. God never intended that the command should be *actually* executed. His purpose was to make trial of Abraham's faith and obedience ; to make him perfect by suffering ; and in him to propose to all coming generations an illustrious example for their imitation in the various trying services and sacrifices to which the voice of duty might call them. And will any one affirm that God may not, without impeaching his wisdom, his justice, or his mercy, put true religion to the test ?—the test of severe and repeated trials—the better to display, to perfect, and to crown it ? Great virtue has a *right* to be made conspicuous. It is sinking the merit of all true moral heroism to withhold from it the occasions of exercising itself. The justice of God, therefore is so far

from being concerned in guarding great minds from great trials, that it is rather evinced in granting them. Nor are we to estimate such a dispensation by the slight and transient anxieties or pains of the trial itself, but by the lasting joy that awaits and rewards the triumph. Add to this the incalculable advantages that would redound to mankind at large from such an example. No one can doubt that every signal instance of devout submission to the will of God under the pressure of sharp temptations is among the stablest supports and the most powerful incitements to a similar conduct under similar circumstances. Every such example is a new and shining light set up on high to guide, enlighten, and cheer us in the path of duty. But while we find, in these considerations, an ample vindication of the wisdom and equity of this command, perhaps a still more adequate estimate will be formed of it, if we view it in another light. It has generally been held that the present command was imposed *merely* as a trial of Abraham's faith ; and seeing the deed was not executed, it has been affirmed that there was nothing unworthy the divine goodness in having instituted such a trial ; all which may be readily admitted : but as Bp. Warburton has suggested, it hardly accounts for all the circumstances ; and it may be well to state, in a condensed form, the theory of that learned divine in regard to it. He supposes that Abraham was desirous of becoming acquainted with the *manner* in which all the families of the earth should be blessed in him ; and upon this he builds the conclusion that the command was imposed upon him chiefly with the design of teaching him by *action*, instead of *words*, and thus enabling him to *see* and *feel* by what means this great end should be accomplished. In other words, that it was a prefiguration of the sacrifice of Christ.

This theory the author founds upon that passage of the Gospel of John 8

AND it came to pass after these things, that a God did tempt

a 1 Cor. 10. 13. Heb. 11. 17. Jam. 1. 12.  
1 Pet. 1. 7.

56. in which the Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad.' It is evident, from the reply made by the Jews to this assertion, that they understood the expression *to see* in its most literal sense; while it is equally evident, that when they objected to the possibility of a man, not yet fifty years old, having *seen* Abraham, our Lord did not correct them in the notion which they had formed as to *seeing*. It was not, however, *himself personally*, whom our Saviour asserted that Abraham rejoiced to see, but his *day*; by which cannot be meant the period of his sojourn upon earth, but the circumstance in his life which was of the highest importance, and mainly characteristic of his office as the Redeemer. That the term will admit of this interpretation is indubitable, from the frequent use made, in a similar sense, of the word *hour*. Thus, when our Lord repeatedly says, 'My hour is not yet come'—'the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners;' when he prayed that 'if it were possible the hour might pass from him:' where it is said, that 'no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come;' and again, 'that the hour was come when the Son of Man should be glorified,'—in all these instances it is evident that the word does not signify a mere portion of time, from which no one can be saved by its passing from him; but some particular circumstance or circumstances in his life, which were peculiar to him as the Redeemer. The peculiar circumstance, however, which constituted Jesus the Redeemer of the world, was the laying down of his life; and this it was which

Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

Abraham must have rejoiced to see, and seeing which he was glad. But there is nothing recorded of Abraham in the Old Testament, from which it could be inferred that he saw Christ's day in this sense, if he did not *see* and *feel* it in the command to sacrifice his only son. In this transaction therefore, he would have a lively figure of the offering up of the Son of God for the sins of the world; and not only so, but the intermediate system of typical sacrifices under the Mosaic economy was represented by the prescribed oblation of the ram instead of Isaac.

On the whole, we regard this as a very rational and plausible hypothesis, and one that derives no little support from the *place* where the scene of the transaction was laid. If the design of the command had been *simply* a trial of Abraham's faith, it is not easy to see why he should have been required to go to such a distance to perform an act that might as well have been performed anywhere else. But when we find him directed to go to the site of Jerusalem, and to rear his altar, and offer up his sacrifice, on or near the very spot where the Saviour was afterwards actually crucified, we cannot well avoid seeing in the incident a designed typical and prophetic character. But a fuller view of the event in its various bearings will be gained from the explanations that follow.

1. *And it came to pass after these things* Heb. 'After these words.' That is, we suppose, not *merely* after the things recorded in the preceding chapter, but after all the previous trials which Abraham had been called to pass through. Notwithstanding he may have hoped for a period of tranquil rest in the de-

2 And he said, Take now thy son, <sup>b</sup> thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee <sup>c</sup> into the

• Heb. 11. 17. <sup>b</sup> 2 Chron. 3. 1.

eline of life, after the various trials and conflicts, the dangers and deliverances through which he had passed; yet he is once more reminded that he is still in the flesh, that the days of his warfare are not yet accomplished, and that he must arm himself for a far more fiery trial than any he has yet endured. We cannot but feel for the venerable patriarch thus suddenly awakened from his state of repose, and summoned to a new and unparalleled conflict; but the event teaches us that a believer's trials are not confined to the commencement of his course; that the longest period of rest and peace may be succeeded by a sore temptation; and the severest conflict be reserved for the last.—¶ *God did tempt Abraham.* Heb. נִסָּה *nissah*, tried, proved. Gr. *πειρασε*, id. 'This literal rendering of the term, which is actually given in the old Geneva version, 'God did prove Abraham,' goes at once to correct the erroneous impression that might possibly be received from our English word 'tempt,' which usually has the sense of *exciting to sin*. But in this sense we are expressly assured by James 1. 13, that 'God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man; he neither deceives any man's judgment nor perverts his will, nor seduces his affections, nor does any thing else that can subject him to the blame of men's sins. Temptation in this bad sense always proceeds from the malice of Satan working on the corruptions of our own hearts. God may, however, consistently with all his perfections, by his providence, bring his creatures into circumstances of *special probation*, not for the purpose of giving him information, but in order to manifest to themselves and to others the prevailing dispositions

of their hearts. In this sense of *trying*, putting to the proof, bringing to the test, the original term in many other instances is used in reference to the Most High and always in such a way as to leave his attributes unimpeached. Thus Deut. 13. 3, 'For the Lord your God (נִסָּה *nissah*) proveth you, to know (i. e. to make known) whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul.' 2 Chron. 32. 31, 'In the business of the ambassadors God left him (לִנְסוֹתָהוּ *lenassotho*) to try him, that he might know all the evil that was in his heart.' Indeed, in some cases we find this kind of trial made a subject of petition on the part of good men, as if they regarded it as a special favor. Ps. 26. 2, 'Examine me, O Lord, and (נִסָּה *nassani*) prove me; try my reins and my heart.' And so with a different word, but to the same effect, Ps. 139. 23, 24, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. And we find Paul, 2 Cor. 13. 5, employing the corresponding Gr. term, when enjoining as a duty to be performed by Christians towards themselves, the very *probation*, which is indicated by the Heb word; 'Examine (πειραζε *peiraze*) thy selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.'—¶ *Behold*, here I am. Heb. הִנְנִי *hinnini*, behold me. Arab. 'What is thy pleasure?' The patriarch's prompt obsequiousness to the slightest call of God is strikingly set forth in this reply. It exhibits him as presenting himself in the divine presence, ready at a moment's warning to enter upon any service that might be enjoined upon him, without first waiting to know distinctly

what it was, or what were the reasons of it. Our obedience ever derives its principal value in the sight of heaven from the ready, implicit, and unquestioning spirit in which it is rendered.

2. *Take now thy son, thine only son* Heb. יָחִיד *yahid*, *only*. Gr. ἀγαπητον *beloved*. As an *only* son is usually the object of a very intense affection, the epithets *only* and *beloved* came to be used interchangeably. Thus Prov. 4. 3, 'For I was my father's son, tender and *only* (beloved) in the sight of my mother;' where the original Heb. יָחִיד *only* is also rendered by the Sept. ἀγαπωμενος *beloved*. The term μονογενής *only begotten*, applied to Christ in the New Testament, is of equivalent import. In accordance with the Heb. therefore, Paul calls him, Heb. 11. 17, 'his *only begotten son*.' Isaac was the *only* son of Sarah, the free woman, and he *only*, in contradistinction from Ishmael, who was now expelled, was to be reckoned the seed of Abraham and the heir of the promises. In this sense Abraham would naturally understand it; and thus understood, it could not but go to enhance beyond expression the anguish of a father's heart in view of the command now given him. Indeed, the language in which this severe mandate is conveyed, appears to be purposely so constructed, as to aggravate to the utmost the wound it was calculated to inflict. Every word seems chosen with a view to awaken some painful feeling, and to increase the difficulty of compliance. To a person of humane and benevolent disposition, like Abraham, the idea of a human sacrifice would naturally be in the highest degree revolting, had the meanest slave of his household been demanded, and had the choice of the victim been left to himself. What then must have been his emotions as the true object of the command unfolded itself, and he found his own beloved son demanded as a sacrificial offering! Let us for a mo-

ment put our souls in his soul's stead, and realize to ourselves the spontaneous train of thought and feeling which must have passed through his mind. 'Take now thy son;' and for what?—To invest him with all the honors of the promise, to put him in possession of the destined inheritance? Alas no!—To seek for him a fitting companion to share with him the blessings and comforts that might be expected to flow from the covenant favor of his own and his father's God? Neither is this the end of the command. 'Take now thy son—thine *only* son—Isaac—whom thou lovest, and—offer him up upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of!' Was ever message like this addressed to a father?—each word more piercing to parental ears than the keenest dagger to the heart!—every clause awakening a new and sharper pang of anguish! Who but Abraham could have forborne remonstrance on such a heart-rending occasion? Who but he could have refrained from saying, 'Lord, shall I lose my child?—lose him almost as soon as I have received him? Didst thou give him only to tantalize thy servant? Remember the long years through which his birth was expected, and the transports of joy with which at length it was hailed, and which was commemorated in the name of thine own appointment. Remember the promises which can be fulfilled only on the condition of his life being prolonged.—If sin lie at the door, let *me* expiate the guilt. Let thousands of rams, let every bullock in my stalls, bleed at thine altar. These are nothing compared with my child.—Or if nothing will appease thine indignation but human blood, let *my* death be the sacrifice. I am old and grey-headed. The best of my days are past, and the best of my services performed. My life is of little value. Let me die, but let him live.—Yet if the decree cannot be reversed, if the offering must come from my own family, if it must be the fruit of my own

body, O that Ishmael—yet how shall I speak it?—my heart bleeds at the thought!—but as for Isaac, the son of Sarah, the son of my old age, the crown of all my hopes, the very solace of my soul; how shall I survive such a loss? The blow that goes to his heart, must be fatal to us both.' Such we may conceive to have been the plea which fond nature would have prompted in any other father than the father of the faithful; and if his prayer availed not to avert the doom of death, he would have besought that it might be mitigated; that he might expire by a natural dissolution; that some disease might gently loose the cords of life, and that his sorrowing but submissive parents might have the melancholy consolation of soothing his dying pangs, and of closing his eyes when he had ceased to live. At any rate he would sue to be exempted from the pain of witnessing the sad catastrophe. If the son of his love must be bound hand and foot for the slaughter; if he must receive the steel into his bosom, and welter in his own blood, how fervently would he ask to be spared the anguish of beholding such a scene. Such, we say, would be the native promptings of the paternal heart. Yet in the case of Abraham all these aggravations clustered round the command that was given him, and as no alleviation was hinted to him, so none does he seem to have sought. He who before staggered not at the promise, staggers not now at the precept. Deaf alike to the arguings of carnal reason, and the yearnings of fatherly affection, he consults not with flesh and blood, but enters with the utmost promptitude upon the work before him; and the sequel informs us that it was carried out as it was commenced, in the full triumph of an unwavering faith.—¶ *The land of Moriah.* Heb. אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה *el eretz hammoriyah*; by interpretation *the land of vision*. Gr. εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὀψιλληὴν *to the high land*; i. e. the visible, the con-

spicuous land. Chal. 'To the land of reverence or worship;' the variation from the Hebrew being owing to the Targum's referring the word to the root יָרָא *yara*, to fear, to reverence, instead of deriving it from רָאָה *raah*, to see. The Gr. evidently refers the term to the right root, but interprets it solely of the high, commanding, conspicuous character of the locality in question. The probability is, that the name is here used proleptically, it having been given from the event, in reference to the remarkable *vision* or *manifestation* of the Most High which was there made, and to which allusion is had in the expression *Jehovah-jireh*, v. 14. Indeed, this seems to be intimated in the very form of the word itself, which Fuller (Misc. Sac.) suggests is a contraction or compound of מֹרְיָה *moreh-jah*, *Jehovah manifested*, by a process of formation which is fully given by Rosenmuller in loc. That the land of Moriah included the site of Jerusalem, where was a well-known mountain called by the same name, is a point universally admitted; but upon which one of the several hills included in the compass of the city the commanded sacrifice was to be offered up, it is impossible to determine. From the congruities of the case, we should naturally suppose that the spot would be selected on which the antitypical sacrifice was to be made in the fulness of time, and this is perhaps the general opinion of commentators. But this is made less certain by the now admitted fact that Calvary was not properly a mountain; and that, although the place of the crucifixion is often popularly called 'Mount Calvary,' yet the Scriptures nowhere authorise this mode of expression. There was doubtless a gentle swell or rocky protuberance in the ground, resembling in form a human skull, from which the name was derived; but as the present locality has no appearance of a mountain, or even a hill of any size, so we have no reason

3 ¶ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave

the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

to think it was ever entitled to such a designation. But we can easily conceive that it would have answered all the typical purposes intended in the transaction, to have had the offering made on *any* of the several mountain-tops which distinguish the site of that venerable city. We incline, on the whole, to the opinion that it was the spot upon which the temple was afterwards erected.—¶ *Offer him there for a burnt-offering.* Heb. *העלה לעלה* *make him ascend for an ascension*, one of the usual terms in the original for offering. The act was performed by first cutting the throat of the animal, to drain off its blood, and then consuming the body to ashes upon the altar.

3. *Abraham rose up early in the morning, &c.* The ready obedience exhibited by the patriarch to this call, evinces beyond question that he must have been perfectly satisfied of its emanating from God. The law of parental duty, the instincts of parental feeling, would inevitably have prevailed over a dubious revelation; and though we may be unable to determine *how* he could have been thus assured, yet of the fact there can be no doubt. His conduct was such as might have been expected under the unwavering conviction by which it was prompted. The command came during the night, and it was obeyed 'early in the morning.' There was no doubtful question of its reality or its obligation. There was no culpable communing with flesh and blood. Even Sarah seems not to have been informed of it, lest her affections should embarrass or overpower his faith. 'That which he must do, he will do: he that hath learned not to regard the life of his son, had learned not to regard the sorrow of his wife.' *Bp. Hall.*—¶ *Saddled his*

*ass.* Ordered it to be done. See Note on Gen. 3. 21. The saddles of that ancient period were doubtless a far more simple contrivance than those of modern times. Goguet remarks in his *Origin of Laws* that 'no nation of antiquity knew the use of either saddles or stirrups;' and even in our times Hasselquist, when at Alexandria, says, 'I procured an equipage which I had never used before; it was an ass with an Arabian saddle, which consisted only of a cushion, on which I could sit, and a handsome bridle.' But even the cushion seems an improvement upon the ancient eastern saddles, which were probably nothing more than a kind of rug or mat of straw girded to the beast.—¶ *Two of his young men.* That is, servants, as explained Gen. 14, 24.—¶ *And clave the wood.* Another instance of the usage so incessantly recurring, by which a person is said to do that which he orders or procures to be done. See on Gen. 27. 37. He carried the wood with him, because the mountain probably afforded nothing but green shrubs, which would make a very slow fire, and thus prolong the consumption of the victim. To guard against this, Abraham took with him a supply of *dry* materials, which could be speedily kindled into a lively flame.—¶ *Rose up.* Heb. *יָקָם* *yakom*. This term is frequently employed to express the act of *entering upon the execution of any business, the addressing one's self to a work*. Thus, Ezra 3. 2, 'Then stood up (*יָקָם* *rose up*) Joshua and his brethren, and builded the altar;' i. e. they set about it. It is applied to God in the same sense; Ps. 3. 7, 'Arise, O Lord, save me;' i. e. enter thou upon the work of my deliverance.—¶ *Went unto the place.* Went towards the place, which he did not reach till the third day.



4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his

young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

4. *On the third day.* It was not quite two days' journey from Beersheba to Moriah, and though it is no doubt true that a loaded ass moves slowly, it is somewhat difficult to conceive why so long a time should have been consumed in travelling the distance of only 42 miles. The fact may be accounted for by supposing that, although he rose early in the morning, and went about the necessary preparations, yet he did not find himself in readiness actually to set forth till the middle of the day. This would leave but half a day's journey for the first day. The second might have been wholly occupied, and early on the third he may have reached the destined spot. But whatever may be thought of this, certain it is, that the trial must have been rendered more aggravating to Abraham by the delay, and the distance which he had to travel. Had the oracle demanded an instant sacrifice, the struggle, though severe, would have been short and comparatively easy. But in a three days' journey, leisure was afforded for reflection; the powerful pleadings of nature would make themselves heard; parental affection had time to revive; and the sight, the society, the conversation of Isaac, could not but combine to shake the steadfastness of his faith, and urge him to return. But whatever may be the promptings of nature, faith such as Abraham's, knew not what it is to relent. With steady step and unwavering purpose he advances to the fatal spot.—¶ *Saw the place afar off.* It being probably pointed out by a luminous cloud, preintimative of the Shekinah, which rested upon it. Such is the tradition of the Jews.' When God bade Abraham go to the place he would tell him of, and offer his son, he asked how

he should know it? And the answer was, 'Wheresoever thou seest my Glory, there will I stay and wait for thee. And accordingly now he beheld a pillar of fire reaching from heaven to earth, and thereby knew that this was the place.'—*Pirke Eliezer.* Calvin supposes that he saw with his eyes the place which he had before seen in mental vision.

5. *Abide ye here, &c.* He left his servants behind, lest their affectionate but ill-judged remonstrances, if not their forcible resistance, when they saw what he was about to do, might interfere with the execution of his purpose. It was not unnatural that they should think him actually beside himself, when they perceived him on the point of immolating his son. Upon what grounds Abraham felt himself warranted to say, 'We will come again to you,' is not clear. Some commentators consider it as a kind of involuntary prophecy, and by some it is resolved into an allowable dissimulation, adopted in order to quiet the minds of his attendants. But a more probable, as well as a more creditable solution is, to suppose that he truly, though vaguely, believed that God would either prevent the catastrophe, or restore his slain son to life. We can scarcely derive any other inference from the words of the apostle, Heb. 11. 17—19, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac—accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.' As his birth at the advanced age which his parents had attained, was a miracle little short of life from the dead, this would render his restoration less difficult of belief than it would otherwise have been. And as he was assured, that the promise before given, that in Isaac and in him

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and <sup>d</sup> laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife: and they went both of them together.

<sup>d</sup> John 19. 17.

only, should his seed be called and multiplied, could not fail, he must have been, on the whole, persuaded that God would accomplish his word by raising his son from the dead. Accordingly the Apostle goes on to affirm that 'he received Isaac from the dead in a figure,' or parable. That is, as he is said to have been not actually, but intentionally and virtually offered up; so he was not literally, but virtually and figuratively restored to life from the dead. Others, however, refer this to a parabolical representation of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ. —¶ *Goyonder and worship.* Heb. גִּישָׁתָּהוּ וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ lit. *and bow down*, the usual posture of worship; thus confirming the conjecture above mentioned, that the *Divine glory* appeared on the summit of the mountain. He had a good reason therefore for proposing to go thither and worship.

6. *Laid it upon Isaac.* As the sacrifice was to be burnt to ashes, no small quantity of wood would be requisite; and from Isaac's bearing such a burden up the hill, it is inferred, that although in v. 5 he is called in our translation 'lad,' instead of *young man*, yet he must now have arrived at adult age. Josephus makes him twenty-five; others thirty-three, that his age might correspond with that of his great anti-type at the time of his crucifixion. The point is wholly uncertain. If, however, as intimated above, the transaction in the main were designed to be prefigurative of the crucifixion of the Saviour, we see no objection to considering this particular incident as typical of Christ's bearing his cross as related by the Evangelist, John, 19. 17. Yet there is not,

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?

perhaps, sufficient ground for a positive affirmation on the subject.

7. *And Isaac spake, &c.* At the period of life to which Isaac had now arrived, he must necessarily have been conversant with the rites and ceremonies which obtained in the Abrahamic age, and more especially with the manner in which expiation was made for sin,—that for this purpose it was necessary that the lives of animals should be sacrificed, and the blood of bulls and of goats should be shed. It was natural, therefore, seeing they were unattended by any thing by which the requisite expiation could be made, that Isaac should propose the question here mentioned, and which was so well calculated to harrow up a father's heart. For we must assuredly regard it, under the circumstances, as one of the most affecting questions ever addressed to mortal ears. How keenly must it have put the faith of Abraham to the test! Let the tender parent substitute himself in the place of the patriarch, and he cannot but understand and feel the ineffable pathos comprehended in this brief interrogation. 'If,' as Bp. Hall remarks, 'Abraham's heart could have known how to relent, that question of his dear, innocent, and pious son had melted it into compassion. I know not whether that word, 'my father,' did not strike Abraham as deep as the knife of Abraham could strike his son.' —¶ *Where is the lamb?* Heb. שֶׁהָיָה *seh*, applied to the young either of *sheep* or *goats*. Ex. 12. 5. Deut. 14. 4. The Gr., however, has το πρόβατον το εις ολοκαυτων the *sheep for holocaust*.

8. *God will provide himself a lamb for*

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to a place which God had told him of; and

Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

\* Heb. 11. 17. Jam. 2. 21.

a burnt-offering. Heb. יִצְחָק לְרִאשֹׁן יִרְאֶה לִּי חֶסֶד, *will see for himself the lamb*. Chal. 'My son, there will be revealed before God for himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' Gr. *οψεται εαυτον προβατον, will see for himself a sheep*. The idiom is Hebraic, that language having no other term for *provide* or *foresee*, than *to see*. Thus 1 Sam. 16. 1, 'I have *provided* me a king among his sons.' Heb. I have *seen* me a king, &c. Gen. 41. 33, 'Now therefore, let Pharaoh *look out* a man discreet and wise,' &c. Heb. Let Pharaoh *see* a man, &c. The answer thus returned, though evidently evasive, was yet so happily framed, that it could not but have been satisfactory to Isaac. Piety to God, and filial reverence and deference to his father, had no doubt been among the earliest lessons with which his mind was imbued; and the present reply addressed itself to both these principles. It was clear that his father, from the fixed solemnity of his manner, and from the strange and inexplicable nature of the whole proceeding, was engaged in some religious service of more than usual sacredness; and as he knew from his father's general conduct that he would neither do nor say any thing unadvisedly, and as he was doubtless aware that he had entered upon the business in obedience to a divine command, he would probably take it for granted that Abraham was fully *authorised* to reply as he did, and that he did not speak at random in saying that God would provide himself a lamb for sacrifice. His ready acquiescence, therefore, in the answer made to his enquiry, shews the working of a genuine faith in him as well as in his father.

9 *Bound Isaac his son, and laid him*

*on the altar on the wood*. Not that this was necessary as a measure of precaution to prevent Isaac's escaping, but simply to conform to the usual rites prescribed in the offering up of animal sacrifices. As the victims were bound by their four legs, so Isaac was doubtless bound by the hands and feet.—Hitherto it appears that Abraham had not informed his son of the true import of the command which he had received. But now the mighty secret with which his bosom labored must be divulged, and the lamb for the burnt-offering produced. The Jewish historian, Josephus, presents us with a dialogue which passed between the father and the son on this occasion, striking and pathetic indeed, but far inferior to the beautiful simplicity of Moses. *He* has not, it is true, informed us of the express words in which the annunciation was made to Isaac; but whatever they were, their purport was evidently this;—'Thou thyself, my dear child, art the destined victim. That God, who graciously gave thee to my longing desires, is now pleased to require thee again at my hand. The Lord gave, the Lord taketh away; let us both adore the name of the Lord.' But the sacred historian has thrown a veil over this affecting scene, that the imagination of the reader might portray to him more vividly than it is in the power of language to do, the struggle of the father and the agonies of the son. Had not the patriarch been sustained by the consciousness that he was doing every thing in obedience to the will of God, it is easy to perceive that the conflict would have been too great for human endurance. We cannot see how it would have been possible for him so

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the Angel of the Lord

coolly and composedly to have gone about the execution of the fearful order. And as it was, what must he have suffered while building the altar—laying on the wood—binding his beloved son—and placing him upon the pile so soon to be smeared with his blood and mingled with his ashes! Every view we can take of the affecting procedure works our sympathies to a higher pitch of intensity, and elevates the character of the patriarch immeasurably in our esteem. But let not the almost equal merit of Isaac be forgotten. The consideration of his exemplary conduct, his meek and pious resignation to the divine appointment, is perhaps apt to be lost in the vague impression that he was too young to entertain an adequate sense of his danger, and too feeble to have made resistance, had he been so inclined. But allowing him to have been no more than twenty-five, can it be supposed that an old man an hundred and twenty-five years of age, could have bound, without his consent, a young man in the very prime and vigor of life? Unquestionably Isaac now approved himself the worthy son of such a sire; and in his cheerful compliance we seem to hear him saying, 'I should be unworthy of life, were I capable of shewing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar; how much more when my heavenly father re-demands his own.' Thus it was not so much the superior strength, or even the parental authority, of the father, as the filial affection and pious obedience of the son, that prevailed on this trying occasion.

10. *And Abraham stretched forth his hand, &c.* We feel an involuntary shuddering as we draw near to the fear-

called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here *am I*.

ful crisis. Nature shrinks back at the spectacle here presented of a father lifting up his hand armed with a deadly weapon against the life of his son! But here was the completion of Abraham's obedience and of his faith. Any thing short of this, and all would have been unavailing. This last, this agonizing moment, when the knife was taken and the hand outstretched to strike, consummated the trial of Abraham, and bequeathed his faith to the church of God as the most perfect model which mere mortality has ever offered of it. And as he proceeded so far in his obedience as to afford demonstrative evidence that he *would* have gone to the utmost extent of the letter of the command, God accepted the will for the deed, and the apostle therefore speaks of it, Heb. 21. 17, as if the act were *really* performed; 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, *offered up* Isaac: and he that had received the promises, *offered up* his only begotten son;' where the term is that usually employed to signify not a *purposed* but an *actual* offering.

11. *The Angel of the Lord called unto him, &c.* A moment more, and the victim would have been smitten; but in that moment the awful mandate is countermanded. A voice too familiar to Abraham not to be at once recognised as that of God himself addresses him out of heaven, and averts the dire catastrophe. Though termed an Angel, yet it is evident from the manner in which he here speaks of himself, and from what is said v. 12, 16, that he was not a created being, but was no other than the divine personage so often introduced into the sacred narrative under the title of the Angel Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, &c. respecting whom see note on Gen. 16. 7.

12 And he said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.

† 1 Sam. 15. 22. Mic. 6. 7, 8. \* ch. 26. 5. Jam. 2. 22.

12. *Lay not thy hand upon the lad, &c.* The Heb. נָשָׂא *ycled*, is applied not only to *lads* or *children*, but also to *grown up young men*, as above to Abraham's armed or trained servants, ch. 14. 14; to the young man of Shechem who ravished Dinah, ch. 34. 19; to Joseph when called to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, ch. 41. 12; to Joshua acting as a servant or minister to Moses, Ex. 33. 11; and to Absalom making war against his father, 2 Sam. 18. 29. The command was intended merely for trial; and as it fully appeared on trial that Abraham was cordially *willing* and *determined* to resign his son in obedience to the will of God, the end of the command was answered; consequently the counter-command to forego the sacrifice is not to be viewed as militating at all with the unchangeableness of the divine counsels.—'The voice of God was never so welcome, never so sweet, never so seasonable as now. It was the trial that God intended, not the fact. Isaac is sacrificed, and is yet alive; and now both of them are more happy in what they would have done, than they could have been distressed, if they had done it. God's charges are oftentimes harsh in the beginnings and proceeding, but in the conclusion always comfortable. True spiritual comforts are commonly late and sudden; God defers, on purpose that our trials may be perfect, our deliverance welcome, our recompences glorious.' Bp. Hall.—'I know that thou fearest God, &c. God previously knew all this, and had in effect declared it, ch. 18. 19 The idea is simply that he

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

knew, by a new proof, by having actually made trial of him. He speaks here, as in multitudes of other cases, in accommodation to human usages of speech. It is common for men to say that they *know* that which they have found out by special trial, which they have learned as the result of experiment; and the Most High is here pleased to adopt the same language. Thus Ps. 139. 23, it is said, 'Search me, O God, and *know* my heart;' though the psalmist had just before said, v. 2, 'Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.' For himself he needed not the patriarch's obedience to discover to him the state of his mind; but for our sakes he made the exhibition of Abraham's obedience a ground for acknowledging the existence of the inward principle from which it sprang. It is by a holy and obedient deference to the divine authority that faith and fear are made manifest. As a sinner, Abraham was justified by faith only; but as a professing believer, he was justified by the works which his faith produced. This view will probably reconcile the apparent discrepancy of Paul and James in regard to Abraham's justification. They both allege his case as an example of what they are teaching, but the one respects him as *ungodly*, the other as *godly*. In the first instance he is justified by faith exclusive of works; in the last by faith, as producing works, and thereby proving him the friend of God.

13. *Behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket.* This was in fact an accomplishment of what Abraham himself had a little while before *unwittingly* predicted. In reply to Isaac's question,

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh : as it is

said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

'Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' he had said, 'My son, God will provide himself with a burnt-offering.' By this answer he merely intended to satisfy his son's mind for the present, till the time should come for making known to him the command which he had received from God, in which command that provision was actually made. But now, through the miraculous interposition of Heaven and the substitution of the ram in Isaac's place, it had been literally verified in a way which he himself had never contemplated. 'He that made that beast brings him thither, fastens him there. Even in small things there is a great providence!' *Bp. Hall*. The command to sacrifice the ram, though not expressly affirmed, is yet to be presumed from the circumstances; and in that incident we perceive not only the gracious interposition of Heaven in behalf of Abraham, but also a clear intimation of that system of animal sacrifices which afterwards constituted the grand feature of the Jewish economy, and which was designed typically to foreshadow the future paramount sacrifice of the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' In order to intimate this still more forcibly, it can scarcely admit of doubt that the very place where the ram, after getting entangled, was offered up, was the place subsequently chosen for the site of the Temple, and, by consequence, of the offering up of the stated perpetual sacrifices of the children of Israel. 3 Chron. 3. 1.

14. Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh. Heb. יְהוָה יִרְאֶה *Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will see or provide*. Gr. *Κυριος εἶδεν, the Lord hath seen*. The import of this will be considered in the note on the ensuing clause. The name was doubtless given in allusion to the expression mentioned above, v. 8, 'God will provide himself a lamb for

a burnt-offering.' The striking correspondence between this name and 'Moriah' will be evident upon referring to what is said of the etymology of that word in v. 2. The whole thread of the sacred story makes it evident that good men of old were particularly solicitous to express in some public and permanent manner their grateful sense of the divine mercies. Hence they scarcely ever received any remarkable deliverance from evil or communication of good from God, but they erected some memorial of it, and gave either to the place or to the memorial itself, some name that should transmit to posterity a remembrance of the blessing vouchsafed. Such was 'Beth-el,' where Jacob was favored with a special vision, Gen. 28, 19; and 'Peniel,' where he wrestled with the angel, Gen. 32, 30; and 'Eben-ezer,' the stone erected by Samuel in memory of Israel's victory over the Philistines, 1 Sam. 7, 12. Frequently the name of Jehovah himself was annexed to some word expressive of the event commemorated, as 'Jehovah-nissi,' *the Lord my banner*, Ex. 17, 15; 'Jehovah-shalom,' *the Lord send peace*, Judg. 6, 24; 'Jehovah-shammah,' *the Lord is there*, Ezek. 48, 25. In like manner the father of the faithful bestows a commemorative name upon the scene of this remarkable transaction.

—¶ *As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* Heb. יִרְאֶה *yeraeh, it shall be seen*; the same letters as in the preceding clause, but differently pointed and pronounced. Gr. *ἐν τῷ ὄρει Κυριος ὠφθη in the mountain the Lord hath been seen*. The Chal. evidently interprets it of the future erection of the Temple as a place of worship on the spot, 'And Abraham prayed and served (God) there in that place, and said before the Lord, Here shall the generations (to come) serve (God)

15 ¶ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

Therefore was it said in this day, In this mount Abraham served before the Lord.' With this the Jewish critic Jarchi agrees, saying, 'The simple sense is that expressed by the paraphrast, viz. that it should be, that God would *provide* or *elect* for himself this place, in which he would cause the presence of his majesty to dwell, and oblations to be offered to him.' Some commentators have supposed that this clause should be translated more nearly in accordance with the Greek, 'In the mount the Lord will appear'; or, disregarding the points, 'The Lord will provide'; but this is less conformable to the Hebrew, and gives at any rate a sense differing only by a shade from the obvious import, viz. that in the crisis of need God will interpose. The passage is undoubtedly meant to inform us that the incident here related was so remarkable, the divine intervention so illustrious, that it gave rise to the well-known proverbial saying, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen;' an expression of which perhaps the nearest equivalent in English is the familiar apothegm, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' The name, thus become a proverb in Israel, not only furnished a memorial of God's goodness to Abraham, but a promise also that when those that trusted in him were reduced to the most trying straits, and no way of extrication appeared, he would interpose at the critical moment, and *provide* for their deliverance and safety. The circumstance plainly teaches us, that whatever God has at any time done for the most favored of his saints, may be expected by us now, *as far as our necessities call for it*. Of all the events related in the Old Testament, scarcely any one was so peculiar and so exclusive as this. Who besides Abraham was ever called to

16 And said, <sup>h</sup> By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because

<sup>h</sup> Ps. 105. 9. Luke 1. 73. Heb. 6. 13. 14.

sacrifice his own son? Who besides him was ever stayed by a voice from heaven in the execution of such a command? And yet, behold this very event was made the foundation of the proverb before us; and from this, particular and exclusive as it was, all believers are taught to expect that God will interpose for them in like manner, in the hour of their extremity. Philosophy and reason may remonstrate, and say that we have no grounds to look for miracles to be wrought in our behalf; but faith will assure us, that though outward miracles may be withheld, yet that what was formerly done by visible exercises of miraculous power shall now *in effect* be done by the invisible agency of God's providential care. The *mode* of effecting our deliverance may be varied, but the deliverance itself shall be secured. We are indeed very prone to ask, In what way will he interpose? But to this our answer is, It must be left to him. He is not limited to any particular means. He can work *by* means, or *without* them, as seemeth to him good. The whole creation is at his command. But two things we certainly know; namely, that he will interpose *seasonably*; and that he will interpose *effectually*; for he is, and ever will be, 'a *very present* help in time of trouble.' Let us then confidently trust him in seasons of the greatest darkness and distress.

15, 16. *The Angel of the LORD — said, By myself have I sworn, &c. Chal. 'By my Word.'* Abraham now reaps the reward of his faith, and sees the efficacy of his persevering obedience. The promise of redemption is renewed, a clearer revelation of the divine will is made, a more cheering annunciation of the future prosperity of his family is given. And all this is confirmed and rati-

thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son :

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed <sup>i</sup> as the stars of the

<sup>i</sup> ch. 15. 5. Jer. 33. 22.

fied by the solemnity of an oath, in which we are told by the apostle Heb. 6. 13, 14, God swears by himself because he could swear by no greater. And this affords a clear proof of the divinity of the speaker ; for had he been a mere created angel, he could, of course, have sworn by a greater had he sworn by his Maker : but as it is expressly affirmed that he *could* swear by no greater, the inference is inevitable that he must have been God. His swearing thus on this occasion was virtually pledging the honor of his holy name, and of all his perfections, as the security for the fulfilment of his engagements to Abraham. This was done not only that the patriarch himself, but ' that we also might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.'—¶ *Because thou hast done this thing, &c.* Not that we are to suppose that Abraham had properly *merited* or *purchased* the blessings conveyed in the following promises, for it is clear that the same things for substance had been freely promised him long before, Gen. 12. 2—13. 16. But as he had now put forth a new and signal demonstration of his faith, it pleased God with *this* to connect the promise of the stupendous benefaction which he designed for his servant. Indeed, it will be observed, that the language is something more than that of mere repetition. The terms are stronger than had been used on any former occasion, and, as such, more expressive of divine complacency ; and the whole being couched in the form of an oath, it constituted a more emphatic declaration of blessing than Abraham had yet received.

17. *Thy seed shall possess the gate of*

heaven, <sup>k</sup> and as the sand which *is* upon the sea-shore ; and <sup>l</sup> thy seed shall possess <sup>m</sup> the gate of his enemies ;

<sup>k</sup> ch. 13. 16. <sup>l</sup> ch. 24. 60. <sup>m</sup> Mic. 1. 9.

*his enemies.* That is, the 'gates,' collect. sing. for plur. according to common idiom. Gr. κληρονομήσει τὰς πόλεις τῶν ἐπεναντιῶν shall inherit the cities of their adversaries. Chal. 'Shall inherit the cities of them that hate them.' The meaning plainly is, that they should subdue their enemies. As gates were in ancient times the principal places of resort, as not only their markets were held there, but also their courts of justice and their deliberative assemblies, hence it is common for the scriptures to speak of the power of a city being concentrated in its gate or gates. The possession of the *gates* was therefore the possession of the *cities* to which they pertained ; and this view of the subject goes to explain and justify the Greek version.—'In this and several other passages, the *gate* is emblematic of authority and dominion ; even as in Europe the delivery of the keys of a town is a formal act of submission to a conquering or superior power. Sometimes the word 'gate' denotes 'power' in a more general and absolute sense. A familiar instance of this is where we speak of the Turkish power as 'the Porte,' 'the Sublime Porte,' 'the Ottoman Porte.' This denomination is derived from the principal gate or 'porte' of the Turkish Sultan's palace at Constantinople. When the writer saw this gate, it did not seem to him very 'sublime,' but the mention of the gate involves the idea of the palace, and of the power which resides there.' *Pict. Bible.* We shall hereafter have frequent occasion to advert to this usage. The words are not to be understood, however, as intimating that Abraham's seed were to be uniformly and perpetually victorious over



18 <sup>a</sup> And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; ° because thou hast obeyed my voice.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 12. 3. & 18. 18. & 26. 4. Acts. 3. 25. Gal. 3. 8. 9, 16, 18. ° ver. 3, 10. ch. 26. 5.

their enemies, that they were *never* to be in subjection to a foreign foe, which we learn from their history was not the fact ; but that on the whole and in the final issue they should attain to a triumphant ascendancy over 'every adversary and evil occurrent' The true construction, however, embraces not only the temporal conquests of Israel under Joshua, David, Solomon, and others, but also the higher spiritual victories to be achieved by him who was preeminently the seed of the woman as well as the seed of Abraham ; and of whom it is elsewhere predicted that he shall reign till all his enemies are put under his feet. Comp. Num. 24. 17—19. Josh. 1.—10. 2 Sam. 8. 10. Ps. 2. 8, 9 ; 72. 8, 9. Dan. 2. 44, 45. Luke 1. 68—75. Rev. 11. 15.

18. *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Or, Heb. הַבְּרִכָּה הִתְבָּרְכֻ, *shall bless themselves, or count themselves blessed*, according to the native force of the Hithpael conjugation. Comp. Is. 65. 16. The Gr. however has *ευλογησονται shall be blessed*, which our translators have seen fit to follow. The expression is more emphatic than any which has hitherto occurred in reference to the same subject, and implies how highly they should value the promised seed, and the blessings of which he should be the procuring cause. The phrase 'in thy seed,' it can scarcely be doubted, has for the most part a collective import, implying that the posterity descending from Abraham should ultimately and instrumentally become a signal blessing to the whole world. But from the Apostle's language, Gal. 3. 16, we are plainly taught that the words are to be taken in a more restricted application, and to be

19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up, and went together to <sup>p</sup> Beer-sheba ; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

<sup>p</sup> chap. 21. 31.

understood of *one particular person*, even that illustrious and *divine individual*, who formed the *substance* of all the exceeding great and precious promises made to or through the patriarchs or prophets of old ;—'He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.' Yet it would perhaps be putting constraint upon the apostle's words to interpret them as *absolutely excluding* the collective sense which the expression usually bears. His remarks seem to be grounded rather upon the *letter of the phrase*, which he would give us to understand naturally and prominently refers to an *individual*, who, of course, can be no other than Christ ; while at the same time this interpretation does not, we apprehend, necessitate the inference that that individual actually exhausts the full import of the term. Christ was, however, so far the leading and dominant object of the oracle, as to justify the apostle's application of it principally to him.

19. *So Abraham returned unto his young men, &c.* With what different feelings did Abraham now descend from Jehovah-jireh ! His Isaac lives, and yet his sacrifice is offered. He came to yield his dearest earthly delight at the call of God, and he goes away, not only accompanied by his son, whom he had virtually resigned, but enriched with new blessings and fresh promises ! So true is it that God is ever better to his people than their fears, yea, than their hopes. No sacrifice was ever yet sincerely made for him, but it finally redounded a hundred-fold to the gain and the consolation of the offerer. 'Isaac had never been so precious to his father, if he had not been recovered from death ; if he had not been as miraculously restored as

20 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold <sup>a</sup> Milcah, she hath also borne children unto thy brother Nahor ;

21 <sup>a</sup> Huz his first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father <sup>a</sup> of Aram,

<sup>a</sup> ch. 11. 29. <sup>a</sup> Job. 1. 1. <sup>a</sup> Job. 32. 2.

given. Abraham had never been as blessed in his seed, if he had not neglected Isaac for God. The only way to find comfort in an earthly thing is, to surrender it in a believing carelessness into the hands of God.' *Bp. Hall.*

20. *It came to pass after these things,* &c. The genealogy here given, and occupying the remaining verses to the end of the chapter, is undoubtedly introduced in order to make way for the following account of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, a daughter of the family of Nahor. It was contrary to the design of heaven that the family of Abraham should intermarry with the heathen races among whom he now dwelt, and to add to the recent tokens of the divine favor, he is now cheered by the welcome tidings of the prosperity of his brother's house, in which he would not fail to perceive how kindly God was preparing the way for the higher happiness of his son and the further fulfilment of his promises.

21. *Huz his first-born.* Heb. חֲזִי *Ootz* or *Uz*, the letter *z* in scripture proper names being almost invariably the representative of the Heb. *tz*. 'The land of Uz', the country of Job, was, it may be supposed, so called from this individual. He and his brother Buz seem to have emigrated and settled south, either in Edom or the northern regions of Arabia. Buz was probably the father or one of the ancestors of Elihu, who, in Job 32. 2, is called 'Elihu the Buzite.'—¶ *The father of Aram.* Gr. πατέρα Συρίων *Father of the Syrians* ;

2\*

22 And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

23 And <sup>a</sup> Bethuel begat <sup>a</sup> Rebekah : these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

24 And his concubine, whose name *was* Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thabash, and Maachah.

<sup>a</sup> 1 ch. 24. 15. <sup>a</sup> Called, Rom. 9. 10, *Rebecca.*

probably a correct rendering, as the names of individuals in the scriptures, who were the founders of nations, usually stand for the nations themselves. 'Aram' throughout the Bible is rendered by the Greek 'Syria' and 'Syrians,' as is 'Mitzraim' by 'Egypt,' and 'Cush' by 'Ethiopia.' This usage of the Septuagint has for the most part governed that of all the later versions.

22. *Chesed.* Heb. כֶּסֶד *Kesed*, that is, the *Kasdim* or Chaldeans, respecting whom and their origin see Note on Gen. 11. 28. Of the other four individuals whose names follow, with the exception of Bethuel, the sacred writers give us no information.

24. *His concubine.* Heb. פִּלְגֶשֶׁת *pille-gesh*, from whence the Gr. παλλακίς *pal-lakis* and Lat. *pellax*. Our English word 'concubine' is derived from a Latin compound *con* and *cubo*, implying simply *mutual cohabitation* without a duly solemnized marriage. The Heb. term, however, supposed to be derived from פָּלַג *palag*, to divide, and נָגַשׁ *nagash*, to approach, did not, as the word *concubine* does with us, imply any thing immoral or reproachful. Its true import is that of a *half-wife*, *divided* or *secondary wife*, from the implied *division* of the husband's affections and attentions between two objects. An accurate knowledge of oriental customs and notions is necessary to enable one to enter fully into the force of the term as distinguished from our sense of the word *concubine*. This, as it is well known, denotes a woman who, without being married to

a man, lives with him as his wife. In fact, in its usual acceptation it differs not from *mistress*, and of course conveys the idea of a connexion in the highest degree unlawful and abhorrent to the fundamental laws of Christianity. But with the sacred writers concubinage runs into polygamy, the word being used to designate a *lawful* wife, but one of *secondary* or *subordinate* rank. She differed from the proper wife in not being wedded with all the usual ceremonies and solemnities; in not bringing with her a dowry; and in having no share in the government of the family. Wives of this description are at present known in the East under the title of *odaliques*, and it is generally understood that they are subject to the mistress of the family, or the principal wife, whose nuptials have been celebrated according to the usual rites. They are at the same time treated with every respect as a secondary order of wives—very seldom, unless in cases of criminality, with the indignities inflicted on a slave. The children of the principal wife usually inherit the father's fortune in preference to the children of the *odaliques*. In the harem she takes the upper seat on the sofa, directs the economy of the women's apartments, and when her consort forgets her charms for those of another, her title to supremacy still remains unaltered. She sits too on the same sofa with her husband, although at its extreme edge; while the *odaliques* sit, their feet folded under them, upon cushions spread upon the carpet. When she first appears among the latter in the morning, it is the usage that they should kneel down and kiss the hem of her garment. See *Quin's Life in the East*.

REMARKS.—The transaction which we have now considered, taken in all its bearings, is rich in practical instruction. We learn from it,

(1) *The nature and working of true faith.* A more illustrious display of the

power of this principle was probably never put forth by a human being. In addition to all the aggravating circumstances above detailed, it should be considered that Abraham's previous trials had been very severe. The same things, we well know, may be more or less trying according to the situation or state of mind in which they find us. If the treatment of Job's friends had not been preceded by the loss of his substance, the untimely death of his children, the rash counsel of his wife, and the heavy hand of God, it would have been much more tolerable. So if Abraham's faith and patience had not been exercised in the manner they were *anterior* to this temptation, he could doubtless more easily have borne it. But it was 'after these things' that God appointed this sore trial to his servant—after his being called away from his country and kindred—after his pilgrimage to Egypt—after his domestic troubles and his parting with Ishmael—after five and twenty years' waiting for the child of promise—after hope had been raised to the highest pitch, yea, after it had been actually turned into enjoyment—and when the child had lived long enough to discover an amiable and pious spirit—yet after all this he is called to pass through another ordeal still more trying than any preceding one! And how plausible were the pleas which might have been urged against so fearful a command? Murder was an object both of human and divine abhorrence; and what would the surrounding heathen say when they should hear of this cruel massacre? What would they think of him and his religion when he could represent such a horrid deed of blood as an act of piety performed in obedience to a divine mandate? Would they not universally have exclaimed against him as a monster of cruelty, and said of him at every turn, 'There goes the man that cut the throat of his own son.' Again, with what face could he

look upon his wife whose son he had murdered? How could she entertain the executioner of Isaac, or believe that such an order emanated from God? In all these respects it is easy to see with what a strength of reason his faith had to wrestle, to say nothing of the still sorer conflict with affection. But faith had taught Abraham not to argue, but to obey. He knew that what God commanded was good, and what he promised, infallible; and therefore went forward without wavering in absolute submission to the will of the Most High. Such was the triumph of Abraham's faith. And now, do we desire to form an estimate of the reality and strength of our own faith? Let us place ourselves for a moment in a situation similar to that of the patriarch. Let us think of that person, of that object, which is the dearest to us of any on earth; and let us imagine the breath of the destroying angel withering it, like Jonah's gourd, at our feet,—its beauty fled, and the grave about to shut it for ever from our view; and let us ask ourselves whether we could receive such a visitation without a murmur from the hands of our heavenly Father? Could we say with the Shunamite, in answer to the prophet's message, 'Is it well with the child?' that child which had just expired in her arms—could we say with her, 'It is well.' This is the office of faith, and one of its most difficult works. Yet it has been achieved by thousands, and must be achieved by us ere patience shall have had her perfect work. The most valuable of the gifts of heaven, the dearest of our earthly delights, must all be held as Isaac in his father's arms, ready at the slightest bidding to be laid and to be sacrificed on the altar of God.

(2) *The certainty that God will interpose for his people in the hour of their necessity.* This is the plain import of the proverb, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.' We may therefore confidently trust in him in seasons of

the greatest darkness and distress. He may not come to our help at the moment that our impatient minds may desire. On the contrary, he may tarry long till we are ready to cry, 'The Lord hath forsaken us, and our God hath forgotten us.' But he has wise and gracious purposes to answer by such delays. He makes use of them to stir us up to more earnest importunity; to render us more simple and humble in our dependence, to display more gloriously the riches of his power and goodness when he *does* appear; and to teach both us and others the wisdom of waiting his time. Whatever, then, our unbelieving fears may say, let us be assured that God is no inattentive observer of our condition, and that at the critical moment, when his succour shall be most welcome, it shall come. And where is the christian heart that hath not had engraven upon it many precious remembrances of the fulfilment of this promise? In temporal and in spiritual difficulties; in the day of sorrow, and on the bed of sickness; in the hour of danger to ourselves or to those we have loved, the Lord has most unexpectedly appeared in our behalf, and enabled us to exclaim 'Jehovah-jireh' in view of the joyful deliverance. What then ought to be the effect of these repeated interferences of divine mercy in our behalf? Surely to teach us never to doubt, never to despair, never to despond. If called to give up our dearest possession, the wife of our bosom, the children of our love, let us bow even amidst our keenest sufferings, to kiss the rod and him who hath appointed it. He that hath been with us in six troubles will not leave us in seven; and it will only be adding ingratitude to unbelief, to rob ourselves of the comfort of this delightful assurance. Nor is it in life only that we are to sustain ourselves by cleaving to this confidence. In nature's final conflict, when our faith may be expected to meet its severest

## CHAPTER XXIII.

**A**ND Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.

shock, then shall these cheering words stand out in letters of light, which even the closing eye can read and the fainting heart can dwell upon.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

1. *And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old.* Heb. יְרֵיךְ שָׂרָה *yihyu haye Sarah, the lives of Sarah were,* &c. according to the Heb. idiom which always employs the plur. for 'life;' a usage designed, according to Calvin, to intimate the *various events* of life, its numerous and often rapid vicissitudes, which seemingly divide it into *several different lives*. Another solution, however, of a physiological character, is given Gen. 2. 7. It is somewhat remarkable that Sarah is the only female mentioned in the scriptures, whose age, death, and burial are distinctly noted. She was 65 at the period of Abraham's departure from Haran, lived with him in his pilgrim state 62 years, and died 38 years before him. She is always spoken of in the sacred writings as the pattern of conjugal fidelity and love, and her example is held forth by the apostle, 1 Pet. 3. 6, as the highest model for christian women, and the title of her 'daughters' as their most honorable distinction. The very fact that so few of the incidents of her history are recorded speaks strongly in her favor; for there is little in the even tenor of female life, when that life is passed in the retired and noiseless path of devotedness to God, and in the peaceful round of domestic duties, which can or ought to form the subject of the historian's pen. The very privacy of the christian graces, manifested in such a walk and conversation, while it endears

2 And Sarah died in <sup>a</sup> Kirjath-arba; the same is <sup>b</sup> Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. 14. 15. Judg. 1. 10. <sup>b</sup> ch. 13. 18. ver. 19.

them the more to the select circle in which they move, and which alone can duly appreciate their unobtrusive amiableness and worth, is adverse to their gaining *eclat*. The traits of character which best *entitle* them to celebrity, are the very ones which prevent their attaining it.

2. *Sarah died in Kirjath-arba.* The patriarch, after having enjoyed the tenderest of all relationships during a longer period than that of which a whole life, at the present day usually consists, is at length called to feel the pang of separation. Sarah pays the debt of nature, and is removed to that world where they neither 'marry nor are given in marriage' Although there is *always* something in the breaking of this tie more affecting, perhaps, than in the disruption of any other which unites us to our kind, yet the bitterness of the bereavement was *enhanced* to Abraham by peculiar circumstances. Sarah had been his 'companion in tribulation.' They had shared together in a series of trying dispensations through a long course of years, and their union had at length been cemented by a pledge, such as had never before, and but in one instance since, gladdened the heart of a parent. The stroke therefore could not but be one of deep affliction to the survivor, and the sequel clearly informs us that he felt it as such.—

† *Kirjath-arba.* Heb. קִרְיַת אַרְבַּע lit. *the city of the four*; so called, if we may believe the Jewish tradition, from the circumstance of the four illustrious men, viz. Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; being buried there, as also the four distinguished women, Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. All these persons

were certainly buried there, except Adam and Eve, whose place of interment is nowhere mentioned. But as to the origin of this name, see Josh. 14. 15. Whoever built the city, it must have been one of the most ancient in the world. Egypt was one of the first countries settled after the deluge, and its inhabitants made much boast of the antiquity of their cities; yet we are informed in Num. 13. 22, that Hebron was built seven years before Zoan, or Tanis, the ancient capital of Lower Egypt. At the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites Hebron was possessed by the Anakims, and was taken by Caleb, whose possession it became, being in the allotment of the tribe of Judah. It was afterwards assigned to the Levites, and became a city of refuge. David kept his court there in the first seven years of his reign, before Jerusalem was taken. Afterwards Absalom raised the standard of rebellion in Hebron. During the Babylonish captivity, the Edomites appropriated Hebron when they invaded the south of Judah, and it became the capital of a district which continued to be called Idumæa long after the territory of the Edomites had been incorporated with Judæa. Wells think it became the site of a bishopric in the early times of Christianity, and it was certainly made such when the Crusaders conquered Palestine. Hebron is now merely a village, called Habroun and El Khalyl, i. e. *the friend*, from its having been the residence of Abraham, *the friend of God*. It is situated about 27 miles south of Jerusalem, eastward of a chain of hills which intersects the country from north to south. It stands on the slope of an eminence, at the summit of which are some mis-shapen ruins of an ancient castle. It has some small manufactures of cotton, soap, glass-lamps, and trinkets, which render it the most important place of the district. It is rather a neat town, with unusually high houses; but the streets are narrow

and winding. The adjoining district, which is no doubt 'the valley of Hebron,' is an oblong hollow, or valley, diversified with rocky hillocks, groves of fir, and some plantations of vines and olive trees.—¶ *Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep.* Heb. לִבְכּוֹתָהּ *livkothah, to weep her*; i. e. to bewail or lament her. Mourning for the pious dead is but a suitable tribute to the memory of their living worth. Abraham was sensible of his loss, and gave vent to the natural expressions of sorrow. His religion was not of that sort which values itself on doing violence to nature. He knew nothing of that philosophy which affects to deny what it feels. Neither had an old age of one hundred and thirty years, extinguished in his heart those tender emotions which such an event was calculated to awaken. He who does not weep on such an occasion, is something more or less than a man. From the example of our Lord himself, who wept over the bier of Lazarus, we are taught that there is nothing abhorrent from true wisdom or manly virtue in grave and temperate lamentation for our departed friends. But the Christian is not to mourn as those that have no hope, nor is his mourning to be allowed to interfere with the grand duties of life.—In what sense Abraham is said to have 'come' to mourn for Sarah, is not clear. Harmer thinks that, according to a custom among the Syrians and Greeks, of mourning at the door within which a dead body lay, the patriarch *came* from his own tent to sit mourning on the ground at the door of Sarah's, which was distinct from his own. Gen. 24. 67. But as it is common for those that lead the nomade mode of life, for the convenience of feeding their numerous flocks, to have several places of temporary residence, we should rather infer that he was absent from Hebron at the time of her death, but hastened thither to perform the last duties when he received the intelligence

3 ¶ And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

4 ° I am a stranger and a sojourner with you : ° give me a possession

° ch. 17. 8. 1 Chron. 29. 15. Ps. 105. 12. Heb. 11. 9, 13. ° Acts 7. 5.

3. *Abraham stood up from before his dead.* Or, Heb. יָקָם *yakom*, *rose up*; an expression denoting the moderation of his grief, and the comparative ease with which, from a principle of piety, he was enabled to subdue his emotions, and to rise up and engage in the active duties of life. As there is a time for weeping, so there is a time to refrain from weeping; and it is well there is. The necessary cares connected with our condition in this world are a merciful means of raising us from the torpor of melancholy.—¶ *Spake unto the sons of Heth.* The descendants of Heth, the son of Canaan, and grandson of Ham, elsewhere called Hittites. He was now sojourning in their country.

5. *A stranger and a sojourner with you.* We have now been tracing the history of Abraham through the space of nearly one hundred years, during the greater portion of which the promise of God was pledged to him that all the land of Canaan should be his; and here we find him, at the close of a long and toilsome life, obtaining his first inheritance in it, and that—a sepulchre for his wife. In all this time he was, and he felt himself to be, ‘a stranger and a sojourner.’ It is to the acknowledgment that he here makes to the sons of Heth, that Paul so expressly refers in Heb. 11. 13, ‘They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.’ Abraham, however, did not sustain this character alone. Israel, when put in possession of the land, were taught to view themselves in the same light; Lev. 25. 23, ‘The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.’ Even David, when

of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

king of Israel, makes the same confession, Ps. 39. 11, ‘For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.’ But Abraham’s confession, though true at all times, was peculiarly true and striking when thus uttered at the grave of Sarah. So we all feel it to have been with him, and so with ourselves. Never does the impression of this great truth come upon us with such force, never do we feel the ties that bind us to the earth so loosened, so nearly rent asunder, as when we stand by the grave of those we love. However at other and happier times we may forget the frail tenure by which we hold this earthly tabernacle, we are strongly impressed with the conviction then. We then, indeed, ‘know the heart of a stranger,’ and wonder that we have ever felt domesticated here on earth, where there is so much sin and suffering, so little stability and peace. Would that we could carry this abiding conviction along with us into the daily business of life. How little influence would its trials and disappointments possess over us. How much internal peace would it bestow, to feel that we were ‘strangers and pilgrims’ on earth, and that soon, amid the comforts of our Father’s house, we should smile at the little disquietudes of the way.—¶ *Give me a possession of a burying-place, &c.* That is, *sell me.* He did not ask it as a gift, as is clear from v. 9. He wished to *purchase* a burying-place for the interment of his dead in general, not of Sarah in particular; and in making this proposition, he exhibited a striking evidence of his faith in the promise of the future pos-

6 Hear us, my lord; thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

\* ch. 13. 2 & 14. 14. & 24. 35.

7 And Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my

session of this land by his posterity; for the procuring a sepulchre of one's own was regarded as a sign of the confirmation of a man's right and title to the land in which it is situated. This doubtless is the import of the following passage; Is. 22. 16, 'What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth a habitation for himself in a rock;' i. e. hast taken possession as though the land of Israel were thine own.—¶ *Bury my dead out of my sight.* An expression that forcibly reminds us of the triumphs of death. The faces which once excited the strongest sensations of pleasure, now require to be buried out of our sight. The beauty which conjugal affection doated upon, has disappeared; and those who were but so recently the desire of our eyes, have now become a loathing unto all flesh! Abraham cannot now endure to look upon her whom he once shuddered to think the eyes of another might regard with too much desire, and he is now as anxious to remove her from his presence as he formerly was to retain the possession of her wholly to himself. Let the beautiful, the gay, the vain, the valued, think of this and dismiss their self-complacency. Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

6. *Thou art a mighty prince among us,* Heb. נְשִׂיאַ אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה *nesi Elohim attah, a prince of God art thou.* Gr. βασιλεὺς παρὰ Θεοῦ σὺ εἶ ἐν ἡμῖν *a king from God art thou among us.* Chal. 'A prince before the Lord.' The name of

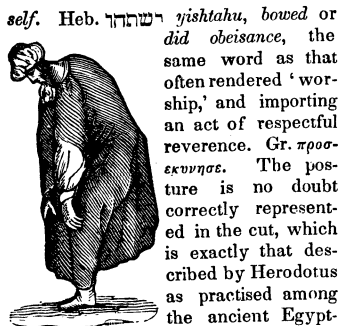
God is frequently affixed to words to give intensity of meaning, or to denote excellence of the superlative degree in the subject spoken of. Thus, Ps. 36. 6, 'Great mountains;' Heb. Mountains of God. Gen. 30. 8, 'Great wrestlings;' Heb. Wrestlings of God. 1 Sam. 14. 15, 'Very great trembling;' Heb. Trembling of God. Ps. 80. 10, 'Goodly cedars;' Heb. Cedars of God. Acts 7. 20, (Moses) was exceeding fair;' Gr. 'Fair to God. So in 1 Chron. 24. 5, the priests who in our translation are termed 'governors of the house of God,' are in the original called 'princes of God;' i. e. eminent and honorable rulers. The term however does not imply the exercise of any *authority* or *dominion* on the part of Abraham, but simply his enjoyment of the blessings of heaven in a pre-eminent degree of worldly prosperity.—¶ *In the choice of our sepulchres.* That is, in the choicest or best of our sepulchres, or in any that thou shalt choose. From the Heb. קֶבֶר *keber, sepulchre*, is derived by a common transposition of letters, the German 'Grab,' (Kereb, Krieb, Greb, Grab,) and from this comes our Eng. 'Grave.' The predominant import of the original is a *subterranean vault or grotto, generally excavated by human art, used as a place of deposit for the dead.* Tombs of this description were almost universally made use of as places of interment for the rich and noble, while the inferior classes were usually buried in the public cemeteries, which resembled the grave-yards of modern times. A more particular account of the ancient mode of burial will be found in a note below, v. 19.

7. *Abraham stood up and bowed him*



sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which



*self.* Heb. יִשְׁתַּחוּ *yishtahu*, bowed or did obeisance, the same word as that often rendered 'worship,' and importing an act of respectful reverence. Gr. προσεκυνησε. The posture is no doubt correctly represented in the cut, which is exactly that described by Herodotus as practised among the ancient Egypt-

ians, and which continues, as a devotional attitude, in the East to the present day. 'The politeness of Abraham may be seen exemplified among the highest and the lowest of the people of the East: in this respect nature seems to have done for them what art has done for others. With what grace do all classes bow on receiving a favor, or in paying their respects to a superior! Sometimes they bow down to the ground; at other times they put their hands on their bosoms, and gently incline the head; they also put the right hand on the face in a longitudinal position; and sometimes give a long and graceful sweep with the right hand, from the forehead to the ground.' Roberts.

8. *If it be your mind.* Heb. אֵת רִשְׁתְּךָ *et yesh eth naphshekem*, if it be with your soul. Gr. εἰ ἐχετε τὴν ψυχάντων *if ye have it in your soul.* Chal. 'If it be the pleasure of your soul.' 'Soul' often occurs in the sacred writings in the sense of *will, desire, prevailing inclination.* Thus, Ps. 27. 12, 'Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies.' Heb. Unto the soul. Deut. 21. 14, 'Go whither she will.' Heb. Go according to her soul. Ps. 105. 22, 'To bind his

princes at his pleasure;' Heb. At his soul.

9. *That he may give me the cave of Machpelah.* Heb. מְעָרַת הַמַּכְפֶּלֶה *me'arath hammakpelah.* Gr. τὸ σπηλαιον το διπλουν, *the twofold cave.* Chal. 'The cave of doubleness.' It is a much disputed point among biblical critics whether the term is to be understood as a proper name or as an appellative. The Jewish commentators maintain the latter, deriving מַכְפֶּלֶה *Macpelah*, from כָּפַל *kaphal*, to be double, as if the cave consisted of two separate chambers, or were furnished with two distinct entrances. Others, we think with better reason, upon comparing vss. 17, 19, make it a proper name, although there can be little doubt that there was some peculiarity in the topography of the place which first gave rise to the appellation. This is perhaps most satisfactorily explained by the extracts from Purchas in a subsequent note.—¶ *At the end of his field.* That is, in one extremity of his territory; the original word for 'field' denoting a far larger region than this term does with us. Indeed, it answers much more nearly to a modern township or county than to the little tract of land which we usually demarcate 'a field.' In Hos. 12. 13, it is taken in a still more extensive sense; 'Jacob fled into the country of Syria (שְׂדֵה אֲרָם) *field of Syria.*'—¶ *For as much money as it is worth.* Heb. בְּכֶפֶה מָלֵא *bokkeseph male, for full silver*, i. e. full money. Silver is often used by the sacred writers for money, and full for full weight, as it is evident from v. 16, that money was formerly thus computed. A similar phraseology occurs 1 Chron. 21. 24, 'I will verily buy it בְּכֶפֶה מָלֵא *for the full silver*;' where the parallel passage 2 Sam. 24. 24, relates the same fact thus

10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that <sup>†</sup> went in at the gate of his city, saying,

<sup>†</sup> ch. 34. 20, 24. Ruth 4. 4.

I will surely buy it of thee במחיר *at a price.* It is worthy of observation that this is the first *money* transaction which we read of in the world. Till then and long after, both among the posterity of Abraham and other nations, wealth was estimated by the number and quality of cattle, and cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. Thus we read in many places of Homer of a coat of mail worth an hundred oxen; a caldron worth twenty sheep; a cup or goblet worth twelve lambs; and the like. The words belonging to commerce or exchange of commodities, in the Greek language, are mostly derived from the names of certain animals, by means of which that exchange was originally carried on. Thus the word which signifies to *barter, traffic, or commute* one kind of goods for another (*ἀντισθαι*) is derived from that which signifies a *lamb*; the verb translated to *sell* (*πωλεῖν*) comes from a noun signifying a *sheep*; the Greek word for *buy* (*ωρεῖσθαι*) comes from that which signifies an *ass*; while the term denoting *rent* or *revenue* (*προβάσις*), and that which signifies a *sheep* (*προβατον*), are of kindred origin and import. A criminal, according to the magnitude of his offence, was anciently condemned to pay a fine of four, twelve, or an hundred oxen. A wealthy person was said to be a person of *many lambs*. Two rival brothers are represented in Hesiod as fighting with each other about the *sheep* of their father; that is, contending who should be his heir. But from the present narrative it appears, that as early as the time of Abraham, silver was employed as a

11 <sup>ε</sup> Nay, my lord, hear me : the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee : bury thy dead.

<sup>ε</sup> See 2 Sam. 24. 21—24.

more commodious medium of traffic. From that period to the present the precious metals have been mostly employed by all civilized and commercial nations for the same purpose.

10. *Ephron answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth.* Heb. באזני beozne, in the ears of.—<sup>†</sup> *All that went in at the gates of the city.* Bargains and covenants used anciently to be entered into and solemnly ratified in the gates of cities, from the ease of procuring witnesses among the crowds that resorted thither, written documents being then but little in vogue. It was especially of importance to Abraham that this purchase should be known and ratified. Had he accepted the sepulchre as a present, or bought it in a private way, his title to it might at some subsequent period have been disputed, and his descendants been deprived of that which he was desirous of securing to them. But all fears of this kind were effectually prevented by the publicity of the transaction. The chief persons of the city were not only witnesses of it, but agents, by whose mediation Ephron was induced to conclude the bargain. Being witnessed, moreover, by all who went in or out of the gate of the city, there was little likelihood, after possession was once taken, that any doubt could ever arise respecting the transfer of the property, or the title of Abraham's posterity to possess it.

11. *Nay, my lord, hear me.* 'Respectable people are always saluted with the dignified title *My lord*;' hence English gentlemen, on their arrival, are apt to suppose they are taken for those of very

12 And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the

land, saying, But if thou *will give it*, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field: take *it* of me, and I will bury my dead there.

high rank. The man of whom Abraham offered to purchase Machpelah, affected to give the land. 'Nay, my *lord*, hear me, the field I give thee.' And this fully agrees with the conduct of those who are requested to dispose of a thing to a person of superior rank. Let the latter go and ask the price, and the owner will say, 'My *lord*, it will be a great favor if you will take it.' 'Ah, let me have that pleasure, my *lord*.' Should the possessor believe he will one day need a favor from the great man, nothing will induce him to sell the article, and he will take good care (through the servants or a friend) it shall soon be in his house. Should he, however, have no expectation of a favor in future, he will say as Ephron, 'The thing is worth so much; your pleasure, my *lord*.'—*Roberts*.—¶ *The field I give thee, &c.* 'In after-times we find that the Hittites were not at all a popular people with the Israelites. This Ephron is the first of that nation who comes under our notice; and his tone and manner on this occasion do no great credit to his tribe. We are not surprised that Ephron's respectful and seemingly liberal conduct has been beheld favorably in Europe, for only one who has been in the East can properly appreciate the rich orientalism it exhibits. We will therefore state the transaction as illustrated by what we have ourselves seen in Persia. Abraham wishes to purchase of Ephron a certain field containing a cave: Ephron, feeling the value of the opportunity of laying, or seeming to lay, under obligation so great a person as Abraham, makes a parade of his readiness to give it.—¶ *The field give I thee*, and the cave that is therein, *I give it thee*; in the pre-

sence of the sons of my people *give I it thee*.' This is exquisitely oriental, as will be seen by the following extract from Mr. Frazer's 'Journey into Khorasan':—'The least a Persian says when he receives you is, that he is your slave; that his house, and all it contains—nay, the town and country—are all yours; to dispose of at your pleasure. Every thing you accidentally notice—his *calleens* (water smoking-pipes), his horse, equipage, clothes—are all *Peshcush-e-Sahib*—presents for your acceptance.' This mode of address, as Francklin observes, is not confined to the great; but the meanest artisan will not hesitate to offer the city of Shiraz, with all its appurtenances, as a present to a stranger on his arrival. All this is understood to mean no more than 'Your obedient, humble servant,' at the end of our letters. But it often happens, that if the stranger be a person of wealth or influence, the man is really anxious to force upon his acceptance any article he happens to admire, or expresses a wish to purchase. But if the stranger is inconsiderate enough to accept it, it will not be long before he discovers that by this act he is considered to have given the person a claim either upon his good offices and favor, or for a present of much more than equal value in return. If, like Abraham, he understands these matters, and is not disposed to receive such obligation, his best course is either 'not to admire' at all, or to insist on at once paying the value of that which attracts his admiration. In the latter case, the man will name the price, like Ephron, in a slight way, as a thing of no consequence: 'It is worth so much; what is that betwixt me and thee?' But when

14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land *is worth* four hundred <sup>h</sup> shekels of silver: what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham <sup>i</sup> weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons

<sup>h</sup> Exod. 30. 15. Ezek. 45. 12. <sup>i</sup> Jer. 32. 9.

the money is produced, he counts it carefully, and transfers it to the pocket or bosom of his vest in a business-like manner, without any indication that shekels of silver are undervalued by him.' *Pict. Bible*.

16. *Four hundred shekels.* Heb. שֶׁקֶל *shekel*, from שָׁקַל *shakal*, to weigh, whence we have by transposition of letters the Eng. 'scale,' an instrument of weighing. It is so called from the fact that the value of money was in those early ages reckoned by weight. For this reason the word *shekel* is at once the name of a *weight* and a *coin*. The value of the Jewish *shekel* was not far from fifty cents, American money. The price, therefore, that Ephron set upon his field, may be fixed at about two hundred dollars; consequently it could not have been a very small tract which in that age could have brought so considerable a sum.—¶ *What is that betwixt me and thee?* 'We all know what a proof of arrogance or ignorance it is considered for a person to name himself before another, even though that other should be inferior; and what odium Cardin<sup>o</sup> Wolsey incurred by writing himself before the king,—'Ego et rex meus, I & my king.' Yet here Ephron mentions himself before Abraham, to whom he nevertheless speaks with great respect: and David, while he continues to treat Saul as his sovereign, and appears before him in a most submissive attitude, uses the same expression, 'me

of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver current *money* with the merchant.

17 ¶ And <sup>k</sup> the field of Ephron which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* therein, and all the trees that *were* in the field, that *were* in all the borders round about, were made sure

<sup>k</sup> ch. 25. 9 & 49. 30, 31, 32. & 50. 13. Acts 7. 16.

and thee' (1 Sam. xxv. 12). This was not therefore considered disrespectful even in an inferior; nor is it now in the East—at least not in Persia—where the strict and minutely regulated etiquette of society does not regard this practice as improper.' *Pict. Bible*.

17. *Were made sure.* Heb. יָקַם *yakom*, stood, or stood up; i. e. were made stable, sure, confirmed. The same term v. 20, rendered by the Gr. *εκπρωθη*, was confirmed. Throughout the above transaction, there was much more in the mind of Abraham than was known to the people with whom he was dealing. The immediate and ostensible reason for making the purchase was, to procure a place of interment for his wife. But he had others no less important. One of these, as we have already intimated, was to express his confidence in the divine promise. God had promised to him and to his seed the land wherein he sojourned. But Abraham had continued there till this time without gaining in it so much as one foot of land. Yet it was not possible that the promise could fail. He was as much assured that it should be fulfilled, as if he had seen its actual accomplishment. Under this conviction he purchased the field as a pledge and earnest of his future inheritance. A similar compact, made with precisely the same view, occurs in the prophecies of Jeremiah, ch. 33 6—16, 42—44. The prophets had foretold the speedy desolation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the restoration of the Jews to their

18 Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mam-

re; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

20 And the field, and the cave that is therein <sup>1</sup> were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place, by the sons of Heth.

<sup>1</sup> See Ruth 4. 7, 8, 9, 10. Jer. 32. 10, 11.

own land after a captivity of seventy years. His uncle's son, alarmed, as it should seem, by the approach of the Chaldean army, determined to sell his estate; and offered it to Jeremiah first, because the right of redemption belonged to him. By God's command, Jeremiah bought the inheritance, and having had the transfer signed and sealed in a public manner, he buried the writings in an earthen vessel, that, being preserved to the expiration of the Babylonish captivity, they might be an evidence of his title to the estate. This was done, not that the prophet or his heirs might be enriched by the purchase, but that his conviction of the truth of his own prophecies might be made manifest. But in addition to this, and closely connected with it, Abraham designed to perpetuate among his posterity the expectation of the promised land. It was to be four hundred years before his seed were to possess the land of Canaan. In that length of time it was probable that without some memento, the promise itself would be forgotten; and more especially during their Egyptian bondage. But their having a burying-place in Canaan, where their bones were to be laid with the bones of their father Abraham, was the most likely means of keeping alive in every succeeding generation the hope of ultimately possessing the whole land. Accordingly we find it did produce this very effect; for as Abraham and Sarah were buried in that cave, so were Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah, notwithstanding Jacob died in Egypt. And Joseph also, though buried in Egypt, gave commandment that when the Israelites should depart

out of the land of Egypt to possess the land of Canaan, they should carry up his bones with them, and bury them in the sepulchre of his progenitors.

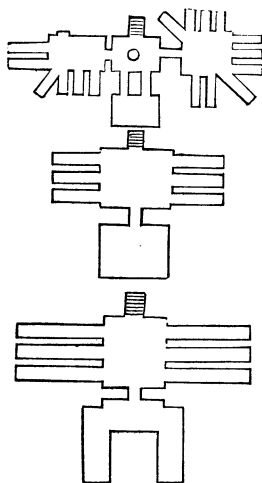
19. *Buried Sarah his wife, in the cave, &c.* 'This chapter affords the earliest notice of the practice, which was formerly very prevalent in the East, of depositing the dead in natural or artificial caves, great numbers of which are still to be found in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Persia. In the mountainous country of southern Palestine there are abundance of natural caves in the rocks, which might easily be formed into commodious sepulchral vaults; and where such natural caves are wanting, sepulchres were hewn in the rock for such families as were able to incur the necessary expense; for this was the mode of sepulchre decidedly preferred by those who could obtain it. The arrangement and extent of these caves varied with circumstances. Those in the declivity of a mountain were often cut in horizontally; but to others there was usually a descent by steps from the surface. The roofs of the vaults are commonly arched; and sometimes, in the more spacious vaults, supported by colonnades. These rocky chambers are generally spacious, being obviously family vaults, intended to receive several dead bodies. Niches, about six or seven feet deep, are usually cut in the sides of the vault, each adapted to receive a single corpse; but in some vaults small rooms are cut in the same manner; and in others, stone slabs of the same length are fixed horizontally against the walls, or cut out of the rock, one above another, serving as shelves on which the corpses were de

posited : in others, however, the floor itself is excavated for the reception of the dead, in compartments of various depths, and in the shape of a coffin. Some of the bodies were placed in stone coffins, provided with sculptured lids ; but such sarcophagi were by no means in general use ; the bodies, when wound up in the grave-clothes, being usually deposited without any sort of coffin or sarcophagus. The vaults are always dark, the only opening being the narrow entrance which is usually closed by a large stone rolled to its mouth ; although some of a superior description are shut by stone doors, hung in the same manner as the doors of houses, by pivots turning in holes in the architrave above and in the threshold below. Some of these vaults consist of several chambers, one within another, connected by passages. The innermost chambers are usually deeper than the exterior, with a descent of several steps. When there is more than one chamber, the outermost seems to have been a sort of ante-room, the walls being seldom occupied with sepulchral niches or shelves. This cave of Machpelah became, after the purchase by Abraham, the family sepulchre of the Hebrew patriarchs ; and it is reasonable to conclude that it was of superior size, and contained more than one apartment. The Spanish Jew, Benjamin of Tudela, visited the place about 650 years ago ; and as his account is precise and interesting, we quote it from 'Purchas his Pilgrimes,' 1625. 'I came to Hebron, seated in a plaine ; for Hebron, the ancient metropolitan citie, stood upon an hill, but it is now desolate. But in the valley there is a field, wherein there is a duplicitie, that is, as it were, two little valleyes, and there the citie is placed ; and there is an huge temple there called Saint Abraham, and that place was the synagogue of the Iewes, at what time the country was possessed by the Ishmaelites. But the Gentiles, who afterwards obtayned and held the

same, built sixe sepulchres in the temple, by the names of Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Rebecca, Iacob, and Lia (Leah). And the inhabitants now tell the pilgrimes that they are the monuments of the patriarkes ; and great summes of money are offered there. But surely, to any Iew coming thither, and offering the porters a reward, the cave is shewed, with the iron gate opened, which from antiquitie remaineth yet there. And a man goeth down with a lamp-light into the first cave, where nothing is found, nor also in the second, untill he enter the third, in which there are the sixe monuments, the one right over against the other ; and each of them are engraven with characters, and distinguished by the names of every one of them after this manner,—*Sepulchrum Abraham patris nostri, super quem pax sit* ; and so the rest, after the same example. And a lampe perpetually burneth in the cave, day and night ; the officers of the temple continually ministering oile for the maintenance thereof. Also, in the self-same cave, there are tuns full of the bones of the ancient Israelites, brought thither by the families of Isreal, which even untill this day remaine in the self-same place.' This curious account agrees pretty well the above general description. The word *Machpelah* means 'double,' applied rather the field containing the cave, than to the cave itself. Benjamin's mention of the two valleyes forming, as Purchas translates, 'the field of duplicity,' explains the application which has perplexed Calmet and others. Sandys, who was there early in the seventeenth century, and who describes the valley of Hebron as 'the most pregnant and pleasant valley that ever eye beheld,' mentions the 'goodly temple' built by the empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, and afterwards changed into a mosque, as a place of much resort to Moslem pilgrims. John Sanderson was there in the summer of 1601, and the

account he gives agrees, as far as it goes, with that of the Spanish Jew; but access to the cave was more restricted than it seems to have been in the time of the latter. He says, 'Into this tombe not any are suffered to enter, but at a square hole through a thick wall they may discern a little light of a lamp. The Jewes do their ceremonies of prayer there without. The Moores and Turkes are permitted to have a little more sight, which is at the top, where they let down the oyle for the lampe; the lampe is a very great one, continually burning.' For upwards of a century only two or three Europeans have been able, either by daring or bribery, to obtain access to the mosque and cave. Ali Bey, who passed as a Mussulman, has given a description of it; but his account is so incompatible with all others, and with the reports of the Turks, that it is difficult to admit its accuracy. According to all other statements, the sepulchre is a deep and spacious cavern, cut out of the solid rock; the opening to which is in the centre of the mosque, and is seldom entered even by Moslems: but Ali Bey seems to describe each separate tomb as a distinct room, on the level of the floor of the mosque. These rooms have their entrances guarded by iron gates, and by wooden doors plated with silver, with bolts and padlocks of the same metal. He says, 'All the sepulchres of the patriarchs are covered with rich carpets of green silk, magnificently embroidered with gold; those of their wives are red, embroidered in like manner. The sultans of Constantinople furnish these carpets, which are renewed from time to time. I counted nine, one over the other, upon the sepulchre of Abraham. The rooms also which contain the tombs are covered with rich carpets.' We can only reconcile this with other statements by supposing that the Turks have put these monuments upon the level of the floor, immediately over the supposed resting-

places of the patriarchs in the cave underneath; and that, instead of conducting them into the crypt, these tombs above ground are shown to ordinary visitors.'—*Pict. Bible*. The accompanying cut from Maundrell will give a tolerably correct idea of the ground-plan of the excavated sepulchres of the East.



#### CHAPTER XXIV.

As the sacred story proceeds, we see more and more of the simple manners of those ancient times, but we see also, what is far better, the deep regard which Abraham had to the word and promise of God in all his transactions. He carries the great principle of Faith into all his domestic arrangements, and has a single eye intent upon one object, whatever he does. By the death of Sarah, the care and anxiety that naturally gathered about the dear object of their common affection becomes, of course, much increased to the surviving parent. Isaac was now arrived at man's estate, and it was fit that the heir of the prom

## CHAPTER XXIV.

AND Abraham <sup>a</sup> was old *and* well stricken in age: and the Lord <sup>b</sup> had blessed Abraham in all things.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 18. 11. & 21. 5. <sup>b</sup> ch. 13. 2. ver. 35. Ps. 112. 3. Prov. 10. 22.

ise should be established in a family of his own. This becomes now the great theme of the patriarch's solicitude, and the chapter before us details with the most simple and interesting minuteness the steps taken to bring about the wished-for event. The narrative affords a striking instance of the *sovereignty of inspiration*. The Holy Spirit is not governed by human estimates of the relative importance of events. The great revolutions which take place in the world, the rise and overthrow of secular kingdoms, are disregarded by God as comparatively unworthy of notice, while the most trivial things that appertain to his church and people are often recorded with the most minute exactness. We have here a whole chapter, and that one of the longest in the Bible, taken up with an account of the marriage of Isaac, an incident which might as well, to all appearance, have been narrated in a few words. But nothing is trivial in God's eyes which can serve to illustrate the operations of his grace or tend to the edification of his church; and he may deem it no less important for men to be brought to recognize and admire his providence in the most inconsiderable affairs of life than in the most momentous. It is perhaps for this reason that we have here such a detailed account of the incidents and conversation connected with Eliezer's expedition, while in other things involving the deepest mysteries, the greatest brevity is studied.

1. *Abraham was old.* As he was an hundred when Isaac was born. ch. 21. 5, and Isaac was forty when he married, ch. 25. 20, it follows that he was now one hundred and forty. — ¶ *Well stricken*

2 And Abraham said unto his elder servant of his house, that <sup>d</sup> ruled over all that he had, <sup>e</sup> Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

<sup>c</sup> ch. 15. 2. <sup>d</sup> ver. 10. ch. 39. 4, 5, 6. <sup>e</sup> ch. 47. 29. 1 Chron. 29. 24. Lam. 5. 6.

*en in age.* Heb. בא ברמרים *coming, or going, into days*; i. e. into years, as the word *days* often signifies.

2. *His eldest servant of his house.* Heb. עבדו זקן ברהו *his servant, the elder of his house.* So also the Gr. τῷ παλαιῷ αὐτοῦ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ, *his servant the elder of his house*, allusion being probably had to Eliezer, of whom see Gen. 15. 2. The scriptural usage in respect to both these terms, *servant* and *elder*, is important, as they are of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and belong to that class of words whose import deserves to be fixed with the utmost precision. This can only be done by a comparison of the passages in which they occur, and the result of such a comparison will clearly evince that they are both, in many cases, *titles of office*, with which the idea of *subordinate* or *ministerial ruling* is closely connected. Thus, wherever mention is made of the 'servants' of a king or prince, the term is for the most part to be understood of *counsellors, ministers, or other officers* pertaining to the court. The leading idea is not that of *servitude*, as understood among us at the present day. Thus, Gen. 40. 20, 'Pharaoh made a feast unto all his *servants*'; i. e. unto all his *officers*. Ex. 12. 30, 'Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his *servants*;' i. e. all his *officers*. In this sense Moses is emphatically called 'the *servant* of the Lord,' Deut. 34. 5; Heb. 3. 5, from being intrusted with administration of divine things. Retaining this sense of *ministerial* rather than of *servile* agency, the term is used in the New Testament with nearly the import of *steward*, and with prevailing reference to *office-bearers* in the church, rather than *ordi-*



nary members. With a view accordingly to this import of *stewards* or *upper servants*, Paul and the other Apostles frequently denominate themselves the *servants* of Jesus Christ. So in like manner, in the parable of the *servants* receiving the talents, Mat. 25. 14—30, reference is chiefly had to *ministers of the Gospel*, who are *stewards* in the household of God. So too Rev. 1. 1, 'The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his *servants* the things which must shortly come to pass;' i. e. to show unto his *ministering servants*, the pastors and teachers of the churches, for whom the prophetic mysteries of this book were principally designed, simply for the reason that they might naturally be expected to possess means and advantages for understanding and expounding them, which would not ordinarily fall to the lot of other Christians.—The dominant usage of the term 'elder' is strikingly analogous to that of 'servant.' Though originally and properly a designation of *age*, as the office of ruling or administering the affairs of a community was generally intrusted to men of mature years, whose judgment was sound and their deportment grave, yet, it gradually came to denote *the office itself*, apart from the consideration of age, and therefore is repeatedly used as synonymous with *ruler* or *governor*. Thus, Gen. 50. 7, 'And with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the *elders* of his house, and all the *elders* of the land of Egypt;' i. e. the rulers, the governors of his house, and of the provinces. Ruth, 4. 2, 'And he took ten men of the *elders* of the city;' i. e. of the magistrates of the city. Thus in the New Testament, 1 Tim. 5. 17, 'Let the *elders* that *rule* well be counted worthy of double honor.' The kind of *ruling* imported by this term is not that of lordship, force, or despotic coercion, but the mild influence of moral suasion, founded upon the revealed truths of inspiration. The true spiritual ruling in-

stituted in the Christian Church consists not merely or mainly in the administration of discipline or the determination of controversies, but in the exercise of a salutary moral influence, especially by admonition and example, upon those who are the subjects of it.

2. Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh. Great obscurity rests upon the design of the act here prescribed by Abraham to his servant. No allusion to a similar formality is found anywhere else in the sacred volume, except Gen. 47. 29, where Jacob requires the same ceremony from his son Joseph; nor is there any evidence from history that this was a customary rite in taking or administering oaths among any known ancient people. How then is the action to be explained? We cannot perhaps advance beyond a probable conjecture in making the attempt. The phrase 'come out of the thigh' is equivalent to *being born of or descended from one*, Gen. 46. 26: Ex. 1. 5. Again, a name written on the thigh was an emblem of *power and authority*, as Rev. 16. 16, and 'girding the sword upon the thigh,' Ps. 45. 3, is to be considered as a symbolical action of the same import. Connecting therefore the ideas of *generation* and *dominion* with the word *thigh*, and bearing in mind the very peculiar and unwonted title which Abraham here gives to the Most High, 'the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth,' may we not suppose that the patriarch did in fact require his servant to swear by Him who was to descend from his loins, and who was to be invested with kingly dignity and dominion?—in other words, by the very Personage who is elsewhere described as having 'on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.' It is not unlikely that there is something euphemistic in the phrase, and that as Abraham's circumcision was a seal of his faith in the divine promise, the ceremony had a special relation to

3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that

† ch. 14. 22. Deut. 6. 13. Josh. 2. 12.

that part of the person which bore the mark of this ordinance. This is the opinion of most of the Jewish commentators, which is confirmed by the Arabic version,—‘Put thine hand upon my compact, or covenant;’ i. e. upon the token of the covenant.

3. *I will make thee swear.* Heb. אֲשָׁבִיכָה *ashbiaka*, *I will swear thee*; i. e. I will adjure thee; I will bind thee by the solemnity of an oath. The term has a reference to the act which was about to be performed. The swearing on the part of the servant was not verbal, but consisted in performing the rite required by Abraham. Thus he was sworn as a witness is sworn before a magistrate, when he has the oath administered to him, and lifts his hand or applies his lips to the holy volume in token of his assent.—¶ *Thou shalt not take a wife*, &c. Upon comparing this injunction with the general conduct and character of Abraham, we see in it another striking instance of his prevailing faith. His great anxiety was that Isaac should not connect himself with the people among whom he was sojourning; and why? Had he contracted an unreasonable prejudice against them? Far from it. From what is related in the preceding chapter, it is evident he had no objection to exchange with them the common civilities of life. He could estimate their hospitality and kindness as they deserved. He had no ground to complain of their treatment of *him*, but he cannot be insensible to their alienation from God; and to take their daughters in marriage, he is convinced would be a sure way to corrupt his own family. The grand design of God in giving the land to Abraham’s posterity, was the ultimate overthrow of idolatry,

§ thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell:

§ ch. 26. 35. & 27. 46. & 28. 2. Exod. 34. 16 Deut. 7. 3.

and the establishment of his true worship on earth. To what purpose then was he called from among Chaldean idolaters, if his son were to join affinity with those of Canaan? Was there not every probability that Isaac might eventually be led to renounce the God of his father, and adopt the abominations of his new kindred? Without any special distrust of the general firmness of Isaac’s principles, he was still too well acquainted with the infirmities of our nature not to be aware, that there was more likelihood of even the son of Abraham’s being perverted by an idolatrous wife, than of such a wife’s being brought to the true faith by a believing husband. But even should Isaac retain his integrity, there was some hazard that his posterity, partly deriving their origin from these heathen races, and mingled among them, should gradually conform to their idolatrous practices. He would therefore erect the strongest possible safeguard around the pure faith of his seed; and to this he was still more strongly urged, by knowing that the inhabitants of Canaan were devoted to destruction. He saw them filling up the measure of their iniquities, and he feared lest his beloved Isaac and his descendants, becoming partakers of their evil deeds, should share also in their punishment. The measure proposed, therefore, was every way worthy of this great pattern of believers. Throughout the whole, there appears not the least taint of worldly policy, or any of those motives which usually govern men in the settlement of their children. No mention is made of riches or honors or natural accomplishments. The patriarch, with the solicitude of a good father, is desirous of matching his son rather prudently and

4 <sup>h</sup> But thou shalt go <sup>i</sup> unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto

<sup>h</sup> ch. 28. 2. <sup>i</sup> ch. 12. 1.

piously, than wealthily or splendidly. In his estimate, no consideration could outweigh that of the *religious character* of the person sought as a companion for his son. How admirable a pattern is this for parents, in reference to the forming of matrimonial connections for their children! Unhappily great numbers, even among the professors of godliness, bring nothing but worldly considerations to this all-important subject. The outward advantages of fortune, rank, or personal attractions, are the only things regarded. But what comparison can these bear to the internal qualities of sound principle, good sense, amiable temper, and meek devoted piety? What permanent happiness can we promise ourselves in connection with one who cannot understand our views or enter into our feelings?—to whom we cannot speak of religion so as to be sympathized with, advised, or comforted?—with whom we cannot take sweet counsel on the things of all others most interesting and absorbing to our souls? No wonder that in such unions, comfort and serenity of spirit are banished from our abodes. No wonder that there arise estrangement of affection, diversity of pursuits, contrariety of will, domestic jangling, mutual accusations and retorts, and all that embitters or poisons the springs of love and peace. Whether, therefore, we are choosing for ourselves in this matter, or sanctioning the choice of others, let the example of this holy man have its due weight in governing our conduct. Let us learn from him to subordinate every thing to the one great concern—the *interests of the soul*. Let every plan and purpose entertained,

this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again.

7 ¶ The Lord God of heaven,

every occupation chosen, every place of residence selected, every connection formed, express our firm and unvarying conviction of the reality, the importance, the preciousness of those interests which infinitely transcend all others.

4. *Thou shalt go unto my country, &c.* That is, into Mesopotamia, v. 10, where he had lived for some time after leaving Ur of the Chaldees, and where Nahor and his family still remained after Abraham had departed for Canaan. It was not therefore the land of his nativity, but the land of his former temporary sojourning, which he here calls *his*, and to which the servant was commanded to go. See Note on Gen. 11. 28, 31. From the narrative contained in ch. 31, respecting Laban, it appears that some vestiges of idolatry still lingered even among the kindred of Abraham, but doubtless it was far less prevalent than in Canaan.

5, 6. *Peradventure the woman will not be willing, &c.* As was very natural, the servant being about to bind himself by an oath, is tenderly concerned lest he should be 'snared by the words of his mouth,' and engage in more than he is able to perform. His conduct in this matter is much to be praised. The obligation of an oath should not be assumed without a full understanding of its import, and the imposers of oaths ought always to be ready to satisfy the reasonable scruples of those who take them. But the answer of Abraham is equally worthy of our attention. Whatever were his anxiety that his son should take a wife from among his own kindred, he here evinces an equally strong re-

which <sup>k</sup> took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying,  
<sup>l</sup> Unto thy seed will I give this land :  
<sup>m</sup> he shall send his angel before

<sup>k</sup> ch. 12. 1, 7. <sup>l</sup> ch. 12. 7. & 13. 15. & 15. 18. & 17. 8. Exod. 32. 13. Deut. 1. 8. & 34. 4. Acts. 7. 5. <sup>m</sup> Exod. 23. 20, 23. & 33. 2. Heb. 1. 14.

pugnance to his returning and settling in the country out of which *he* had been called. He had had a promise given him that the land into which he had been brought, should be his and his seed's; and he lived and acted upon that promise all his life long. Against present appearances and human probabilities, he maintained an unshaken confidence in the fulfilment of the promise, and took all his measures accordingly. As he had buried Sarah in it under this assured expectation, so he would not allow Isaac on any account to remove out of it; and thus do what tended directly to frustrate the promise. It was perhaps owing in a great measure to his extreme solicitude on this head, that, instead of sending Isaac, who was now forty years of age, and abundantly capable of managing the negotiation himself, he despatched his aged servant to conduct the affair in his behalf.—¶ *Bring again.* Isaac, it is true, had never been in that land *in person*, but in the loins of his father he had: and it is a common usage of the sacred writers to speak of a family or line of descendants as one continued person. Upon this idiom the use of the word *again* in this place is no doubt founded. In like manner, it is said Gen. 15. 16, 'In the fourth generation they shall *come hither again*,' although that generation had of course never been in that land before.

7. *The LORD God of heaven, &c.* Rather according to the Heb. 'The Lord, the God of heaven (יהוה אלהי שמים)

thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then <sup>n</sup> thou shalt be clear from this mine oath; only bring not my son thither again.

<sup>n</sup> Josh. 2. 17, 20.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם) Gr. Κυριος ο θεος, *the Lord, the God, &c.* The assurance which Abraham here gives his servant of the divine presence and guidance on his journey appears to be the result of a strong conviction in his mind, wrought by the experience of the past, rather than by any communication to that effect expressly received from God. 'Every former favor is a pledge of a future. 'Thou hast—thou wilt' is a scripture demonstration. See in Ps. 86. 1—4, six 'thou hasts,' whereupon he infers and enforce his 'Turn us, O God of our salvation.'—*Trapp.* So the patriarch's language here is the expression of a firm, unshaken confidence in the prosperous issue of the expedition. He had been prompted by the most sincere regard to the will of God in having it undertaken, and he could not but infer from all that had been before done for him, and said to him, that he would put the seal of his approbation upon the step proposed. And how pleasant is it to enter upon our work with such an inward assurance!—to be able unhesitatingly to promise ourselves or others, the presence, protection and blessing of the God of heaven in our enterprises! If governed in the main by the pious spirit of Abraham, this confidence may be freely entertained. God will regard it as an acceptable exercise of faith, and not as the promptings of an unhallowed presumption.—¶ *Will send his angel before thee.* Nothing, we think, is more susceptible of proof, than that the term 'angel' in scriptural usage is employed

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

10 ¶ And the servant took ten

camels, of the camels of his master, and departed; (° for all the goods, of his master *were* in his hand;) and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

• ver. 2. p ch. 27. 43.

not only to denote those *personal* agents whom the Most High may see fit to make the executors of his will, but also in an *impersonal* sense, implying in many cases merely a *dispensation of providence*, whether in a way of mercy or of judgment. The phraseology, indeed, but rarely occurs in respect to the ordinary incidents of life, but extraordinary operations of providence, or events fraught with momentous consequences, and as such, having a peculiarly noticeable character, though accomplished by natural means, are in Scripture spoken of as 'angels.' Thus the destruction of the first-born in Egypt is attributed to an angel, because such an event was extraordinary and memorable in the highest degree. In like manner, the destruction of Sennacherib's army is ascribed to angelic agency for the same reason. In both cases we cannot doubt that the judgment was executed directly and immediately by the hand of God. Thus, too, as to the present declaration. We suppose the angel to be the *personification of a special providence*. God would send his angel before the servant in the sense of *preparing his way, of removing difficulties and objections, and fully reconciling the minds of his kindred to the step*. See Note on Ex. 12. 23, for fuller confirmation of this idea.

9. *Abraham his master*. Heb. אֲדֹנָי *adonav*, his lord. So also in the next verse.—¶ *Sware to him*. Heb. יָשָׁבַע *yish-sha-ba*, was sworn to him. The Heb. verb for *swearing*, is always used in the passive voice, as if it were an act which no one was supposed to engage in voluntarily, but only as he was adjured by another

10. *Took ten camels, &c.* Although we are not expressly told that this was done by Abraham's direction, yet there can be little doubt that the whole business of the preparation and outfit was conducted under his eye, and ordered with his approbation. The brevity of the scripture narrative often requires us to supply from the character of the parties or the circumstances of the case many subordinate items which are omitted by the writer. Such inferential additions are frequently clearly confirmed by subsequent parts of the narrative, or the parallel recitals elsewhere found. Thus, in the present passage nothing is said of the servant's being accompanied by attendants; yet it is evident that one man would be unable to manage so many camels, nor would it be at all consonant with Oriental customs or notions for such an expedition to be undertaken for such an object by a single individual; and from vs. 32, 59, it is obvious that it was not. Without allowing his faith such a paramount influence as to lead to the neglect of prudent means, he no doubt designed by fitting out such an imposing retinue, amounting, in fact, to a small caravan, to make an impression upon the minds of the maiden and her family, whoever they might be, to whom the proposals should be made. It would obviously tend to a favorable result were they to receive such an idea of Abraham's and Isaac's substance, as should preclude the apprehension of a female's losing or lessening the comforts of her present condition by acceding to the proposed connection. Had the servant gone alone, without any evidences of his master's wealth, it is clear that he could not reasonably have expected to

11. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water, at the time of the

evening, *even* the time 'that women go out to draw water':

¶ Exod. 2. 16.

obtain the same credence for his assertions on the subject. The measure, therefore, was in every view politic and wise, although we cannot question that both Abraham and his servant, as habitually pious men, placed more dependence on a secret divine interposition, than upon any devices, however well chosen, of their own.—¶ *For all the goods of his master were in his hand.* More literally 'And all the goods,' &c. The original term כֶּרֶב *toob*, here rendered *goods*, is the proper Heb. word for *goodness* or *excellency* of any kind, whether moral or physical. In such connections as the present, it evidently has a secondary or accommodated import, being applied to *riches* or *substance*, because these are what men usually esteem *good*, and industriously pursue as such. The exact purport of this parenthetic clause is a matter of some doubt. Calvin, and perhaps most commentators, understand it as rendering a reason for the servant's large and sumptuous preparations for the journey. Having all his master's goods at his disposal, he might exercise a discretionary power in making provision for the expedition. But perhaps the rendering of the Gr., adopted also by Jerome in the Vulgate, is to be preferred. In both these versions the construction is, 'And (he took and carried) of all his master's goods (something) with him.' According to this the idea is that the servant took with him 'in his hand' a portion of the *choicest*, *the best*, *the most precious* of his master's effects, of which to make presents to the lady elect and her family. Thus it is said of the present brought by Hazeael from Ben-hadad to Elisha, 2 Kings, 8. 9, that he 'took a present with him, even of every good thing (כֹּל טוֹב *kol toob*) of Damascus'; i. e. of the most

precious things of all kinds. So the term is elsewhere repeatedly used in an emphatic sense to denote that which is *peculiarly choice and valuable*. Comp. Gen. 45. 18, 20. Is. 1. 19. Deut. 6. 11. On the whole, we cannot but deem this the most correct interpretation of the two; and we suppose, moreover, that the articles mentioned vv. 22, 52, were a part of the כֶּרֶב *goods*, here said to have been in the hand of the servant when he departed.—¶ *Went to Mesopotamia.* Heb. אֲרָם נְהָרַיִם *Aram naharayim*, that is, *Syria of the two rivers*; denoting the region lying between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The same country is elsewhere called פְּדָן אֲרָם *padan Aram*, or, *the plain of Aram*, or *Syria*. 'Mesopotamia' is a Greek word signifying the country *between the rivers*. The 'city of Nahor,' i. e. the city of Nahor's residence, was no doubt Haran (Charran), of which, see Note on Gen. 11. 31.

11. *Made the camels to kneel down.* As this immediately precedes an act of prayer on the part of the servant, it might possibly be thought that he intended in some sort to make his camels participators in that act. But kneeling is not peculiarly an attitude of devotion in the East; and Eliezer himself did not kneel; for even in his prayer, he describes himself as *standing* by the well. He merely intended to give the wearied camels a little rest, kneeling being the posture in which camels always repose.—¶ *The time that women go out to draw water.* Heb. לְעֵת צֵאת הַשָּׂאֵבֹת *le'eth tzeth hash-sho-aboth*, *at the time of the going forth of the women-drawers (of water)*. 'Water is usually drawn in the evening and frequently in the cool of the morning also. Fetching water is one of the heaviest of the many heavy duties

which devolve upon the females in the East, and one which most sensibly impresses us with a sense of their degraded condition. The usage varies in different countries. Among the Arabs and other nomades, and also in many parts of India, it is the exclusive employment of the women, without distinction of rank. But in Turkey and Persia, the poorer women only are subject to this servile employment, respectable families being supplied daily by men who make the supplying of water a distinct business. The tents of the Bedouins are seldom pitched quite near to the well from which they obtain their water; and if the distance is not more than a mile, the men do not think it necessary that the water should be brought upon the camels; and, unless there are asses to be employed on this service, the women must go every evening, sometimes twice, and bring home at their backs long and heavy bags full of water. The wells are the property of tribes or individuals, who are not always willing that caravans should take water from them; and in that case, a girl is sometimes posted at the well to exact presents from those who wish to have water. It is not likely that Abraham's servant travelled without a leathern bucket to draw water, and it is therefore probable that he abstained from watering his ten camels until he should have obtained permission. The women, when they are at the wells in the evening, are generally obliging to travellers, and ready to supply such water as they may require for themselves or their beasts. The women of towns in Turkey and Persia have seldom far to go, except under peculiar circumstances in the situation or soil of the place, or quality of its water. Their water-vessel depends much upon the distance; if rather far, a skin will probably be preferred as most convenient for carrying a good quantity; but if near an earthen jar will often be chosen.

The present well seems to have been quite near the town, and we concur in the translation which renders Rebekah's vessel 'a pitcher.' The word כֵּד *kad* is different from that (חֵמָת *chemath*) rendered 'bottle' in the narrative of Hagar's expulsion; and is the same word used to describe the vessels in which Gideon's soldiers concealed their torches, and which they broke to produce a crashing and alarming noise. The women contrive to draw an enjoyment even out of this irksome duty, as it affords the best opportunity they have of meeting and talking together, and of displaying their finery to each other. They by no means appear to the worst advantage, as to dress, at the wells; and this circumstance shows that Abraham's servant might there, without any incongruity, invest Rebekah with the ornaments he had brought. To a traveller in the East, the best opportunities of making his observations on the females will occur in the evening at the wells. Eliezer was aware of this, and regarded the opportunity as favorable for his purpose. It appears that the unmarried females even of towns went unveiled, or only partially veiled, on ordinary occasions in these early times. Now all go veiled; and the more extended use of the veil in modern times has probably, in one respect, operated favorably for the women, by exonerating those in families decently circumstanced, from the very heavy duty of fetching water, the proper management of the veil being scarcely compatible with the performance of this laborious office. Accordingly we find that this duty devolves more exclusively on the females, without distinction of rank, in those Asiatic countries or tribes where the women are not obliged to veil their faces, as in India, and among the Arabian and other nomade tribes. We have already noticed the Arabian usage. In consequence of the modifications which we venture to think that the extended use of the

12 And he said, 'O LORD, God of my master Abraham, I pray thee,

<sup>r</sup> ver. 27. ch. 26. 24. & 28. 13. & 32. 9. Exod. 3. 6, 15.

veil has produced among the inhabitants of towns west of the Indus, it is perhaps in India we are to look for the most precise parallels to the patriarchal customs. Accordingly we find, that in many parts of India, women of the first distinction draw water daily from the public wells. They always fetch it in earthen jars carried upon their heads. Sometimes two or three jars are thus carried at once, one upon the other, forming a pillar upon the bearer's head. As this necessarily requires the most perfect steadiness, the habit gives to the females a remarkably erect and stately air. It seems that it is a distinction to carry the jar on the shoulder; and Forbes, in his 'Oriental Memoirs,' relates an anecdote of an intelligent native who, when this highly interesting passage was read to him, inferred that Rebekah was of 'high caste,' from her carrying the pitcher on her shoulder (verse 15). The text, however, does not necessarily imply that she carried the jar erect *upon* her shoulder, but quite as probably means that it was carried at the back, the handle being held over the shoulder by the hand or a leathern strap.'—*Pict. Bible*.

12. *O Lord God*, &c. or rather as before, v. 7. '*O Lord, the God*,' &c. The character of Eliezer, if he were indeed the person charged with the present commission, shines brighter at every step. He shews himself throughout, to have been eminently worthy of being entrusted with so momentous a negotiation. And not only so, but his conduct reflects additional credit upon Abraham, the influence of whose pious example is to be recognized in the humble and devout deportment of his servant. A devoted and exemplary master will seldom fail to make religion respected in his household, and domestics will often

'send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

<sup>a</sup> Neh. 1. 11. Ps. 37. 5.

be brought to know and love that of which they would otherwise have remained ignorant and negligent. This was doubtless the case with this head-servant of the patriarch, who shows his concern for the welfare of his master's household, not by an ostentatious parade of his services, but by praying devoutly to God for success upon the mission confided to him. The prayer is remarkable for (1) *The faith in which it is offered*. He speaks all along under a full persuasion that the providence of God extended to the minutest events, and that there was no presumption in appealing to him on the present occasion. His words are full of confidence that God would direct him in a matter of so much importance to his church in all future ages. (2) *The correct views of the character of Jehovah which he expresses*. He addresses him as the *covenant God of Abraham*, who had given him exceeding great and precious promises. In approaching him in this character, he would occupy the best possible vantage ground for urging his request, as any promise made to Abraham would furnish a plea which could scarcely fail to be effectual. (3) *The sign which he presumed to ask for*. A better, he could not well have desired; for such an offer freely made to a stranger would indicate a most amiable disposition. It would demonstrate at once the humility, the industry, the courtesy, the extreme kindness of the female, and would be a pledge that she possessed all the qualifications which he deemed most desirable in a companion worthy of his master's son. She who could be thus complaisant and obliging to a stranger, would certainly conduct herself well in the relation of a wife. It is a natural inquiry, whether the servant did right in thus fixing in



13 Behold, <sup>t</sup> I stand *here* by the well of water; and <sup>u</sup> the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that*

<sup>t</sup> ver. 43.

<sup>u</sup> ch. 29. 9. Exod. 2. 16.

his own mind upon a sign, and apparently prescribing it to God as a test of the selection about to be made. In reply we may observe, (1.) That the event seems clearly to prove that the proceeding received the divine approbation, if it were not in fact of divine suggestion. (2.) Let the circumstances of the case be considered. It does not appear that any *particular individual* or *particular family* had been designated by Abraham, to whom his servant was to apply. All was uncertainty in this respect; and yet a choice was to be made without any great delay, which might have been attended with special inconveniences on all sides. The exigency, therefore, was peculiar, and the servant seems to have determined to do what common prudence would have dictated to any sensible man under similar circumstances. Being an entire stranger to all the people of the city, he resolved to take his stand at the public watering-place, and judge as well as he could from the deportment of the young women, which of them promised fairest to possess the requisite endowments of person, temper, and manners. All this, as far as we can see, was both proper and politic *under the circumstances*; and being an habitually pious man, when once he had fixed upon a definite course of action, he looks up to God, and implores his blessing upon it. This was all. But his conduct, except in imploring the divine blessing upon whatever

thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and <sup>w</sup> thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of <sup>x</sup> Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

<sup>w</sup> See Judg. 6. 17, 37. 1 Sam. 6. 7. & 14. 8. & 20. 7. <sup>x</sup> ch. 11. 29. & 22. 23.

he undertook, is evidently no rule for us in the ordinary transactions of life. —¶ *Send me good speed.* Heb. הַכְרֵה *hakreh*, *bring it to pass*, or *cause it to happen*; i. e. the object of the journey. Gr. εὐδοκῶσιν ἐναντίον μου *prosperously direct before me*. Chal. 'Meet me this day.' The same word occurs in the original, Gen. 27. 20, 'And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me'; i. e. made it to occur. It is used in speaking of events and occurrences, which, though ordered by the special providence of God, befall men so little in consequence of their own skill or foresight, that in common discourse they are ascribed to *chance*. Thus, Luke 10. 31, 'And *by chance* there came down a certain priest that way.' When Eliezer repeats the incidents of his journey, v. 42, the parallel word employed is 'prosper.'

13. *Well of water.* Heb. עֵינַן הַמַּיִם *avin hammayim*, *fountain of water*. 'Well' and 'fountain' are often used in the scriptures interchangeably. The original has 'well,' v. 11, and 'fountain,' v. 13. The primary and common signification of עֵינַן *ayin* is *eye*; but as the eye is the source from which tears flow, so an opening in the earth from which waters gush out has the same term applied to it.

14. *Hast appointed.* Heb. הִכְתִּיתָ *hokhta*; a term having the import of *demonstratively prepared*.

16 And the damsel <sup>7</sup> *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin; neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet

<sup>7</sup> ch. 26. 7.

15. *It came to pass before he had done speaking.* In the subsequent recital, v. 45, Eliezer says, 'Before I had done speaking in mine heart,' from which it appears that this was a *mental* instead of a *verbal* prayer; and in reference to the speedy answer with which it met, we may cite the very apposite remark of Bochart, that 'so forward is God to bestow his benefits upon us, that they do not so much follow our prayers, as prevent and go before them.' Is. 65. 24, 'And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'—¶ *Her pitcher upon her shoulder.* 'The Eastern women, according to Dr. Pococke, sometimes carry their jars upon their heads; but Rebecca's was carried on her shoulder. In such a case, the jar is not to be supposed to have been placed upright on the shoulder, but held by one of the handles, with the hand over the shoulder, and suspended in this manner on the back; held, I should imagine, by the right hand over the left shoulder. Consequently, when it was to be presented to Abraham's servant, that he might drink out of it, it was to be gently moved over the left arm, and being suspended by one hand, while the other, probably, was placed under the bottom of the jar, it was in that position presented to Abraham's servant, and his attendants, to drink out of. 'She said, Drink, my lord; and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him to drink.' v. 18.—*Harmer.*

16. *Very fair to look upon.* Heb. טובה מראה *tobath mareh, good of countenance, or visage.* Comp. Gen. 26. 7. Ex. 2. 2.—¶ *Went down to the well and*

her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 <sup>2</sup> And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 8. & 4. 9.

*filled her pitcher.* 'It would seem that this well had a descending stair. Such wells are not very common in the East, except in India, where they occur frequently enough. Chardin, as quoted by Harmer, is disposed to understand, that where steps to a well are mentioned, a reservoir of rain-water is always to be understood. Such reservoirs being seldom of the great depth of wells, it is convenient to have steps, so that the surface of the water may be reached by the hand as its quantity diminishes. All reservoirs have not, however, such steps, nor are all wells without them. The grand well at Cairo in Egypt, called 'Joseph's Well,' has a descent of about one hundred and fifty feet, by a winding staircase six feet in width. It is however true, that steps to wells occur but rarely in the East. Their greater frequency in India is probably because the Hindoos do not use leathern buckets to draw water, and their earthen vessels would be very liable to be broken if let down into wells by a rope. Neither Chardin nor any other traveller seems to have noticed the existence of steps to streams of running water in the East; yet in Persia we have ourselves sometimes obtained water from a covered stream, access to which was afforded by descending steps, protected by a vaulted superstructure of brick. We are, upon the whole, disposed to decide less positively than Chardin, that the present 'well' could be nothing else than a reservoir of rain-water, although we must allow the probabilities to be in favor of his supposition.'—*Pict. Bible.*

18. *My lord.* The Hebrew is used in

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit whether

\* the LORD had made his journey prosperous, or not,

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden <sup>b</sup>ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold,

<sup>a</sup> v. r. 12. 56. <sup>b</sup> Exod. 32. 2. 3. Isai. 3. 19, 20, 21. Ezek. 16. 11, 12. 1 Pet. 3. 3.

addresses of politeness and civility, equivalent to our 'Sir.'

19. *Will draw water for thy camels also.* 'Had Rebekah done *no more* than Eliezer had prayed for, we might have supposed that she acted not as a free agent, but was *impelled* to it by the absolutely controlling power of God: but as she exceeds all that was requested, we see that it sprang from her native benevolence, and sets her conduct in a most amiable point of view.'—A. Clarke.

20. *Emptied her pitcher into the trough.* 'Troughs of stone or wood are sometimes, but not often, found near wells in the East. When found, they are commonly at wells near towns, and, like the descending steps, are more common in India than elsewhere. This also may arise from the prejudices of the Hindoos precluding the use of the leathers which the Arabs and travellers through deserts employ in watering their cattle at wells. As the cattle can seldom get direct access to the water in a well, they are usually supplied by the water being thrown into a sort of leathern trough used for the express purpose; but very commonly a simple skin is used, to which the necessary concavity is given by scraping a hollow in the sand over which it is placed, or by propping up the edges with sand, earth, or stones. What sort of trough is intended here and in Exod 2. 16, does not appear.'—*Pict. Bible.*—¶ *Drew for all his camels.* In view of the arduousness of such a task for a young female, we know not how to resist the impression that she

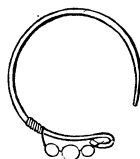
was accompanied and assisted by other inmates of the family of her own sex, or that the water was principally drawn by Eliezer's attendants under her superintendence.

21. *Wondering at her, held his peace.* Heb. *mishtach lah maharish*, amazed on account of her, holding his peace. Gr. 'Considered her, and held his peace.' Chal. 'Was silent in contemplation.' He was rapt in admiration of the divine providence, which had made the event to correspond so remarkably with his desires. The maiden's conduct so amiable in itself, and so exactly in unison with his previous wishes, struck him with a kind of amazement, accompanied by a momentary hesitation whether all could be true. Thus the disciples of Jesus wondered when Peter was cast into prison; and when their prayers were heard, and Peter stood without knocking at the gate, they could not credit the joyful news, but said, 'It is his angel.' We pray for blessings, and when our prayers are answered, we can scarcely believe them to be so.

22. *The man took a golden ear-ring, &c.* It would seem from v. 47, that although he now 'took' or drew out, and had in readiness the jewels, yet he did not actually present them till after he had proposed the ensuing questions. 'Our generally excellent translation sometimes indicates the painful difficulties in which the translators were occasionally involved, in consequence of the ignorance of eastern

countries which then generally prevailed, and which often left them in great doubt about the true renderings. Here we have 'a golden ear-ring,' that is, an odd ear-ring. This being felt as somewhat of an absurdity, the marginal rendering is, 'a jewel for the face;' but again, in v. 47, it is, 'I put the ear-ring upon her face,' which is rather a curious disposition of an ear-ring. The thing really intended seems to be a ring or jewel for the nose; but our translators having no knowledge of such an ornament, which seemed to them to imply an absurdity, have carefully avoided the true idea everywhere except in Isaiah 3. 21, the translator of which portion had probably gained some information not possessed by the others, of this peculiarity of oriental ornament. Yet all their care could not preclude an occasional allusion to it, as where Prov. 11. 22, could not but be rendered 'a jewel in a swine's snout.' The extensive use of nose-ornaments among the Arabian and other females of the East having now become known, modern translators render the present text 'nose-ring,' as is done in the Arabic and Persian versions. Such rings are generally of silver or gold, but sometimes of coral, mother-of-pearl, or even horn, according to the taste or means of the wearer. Chardin, who was professionally a jeweller, must have been conversant with this subject; and he says that the better sort of rings are set with a ruby between two pearls; we do not recollect, however, to have seen rubies in them; but the turquoise is common. This curious ornament varies considerably in size and thickness; but it is always circular, and is worn, not from the middle cartilage of the nose, but from the external cartilage of the left nostril, which is pierced for the purpose. We have also seen an ornament for the nose worn by the Koordish and Bedouin females, which has escaped the notice of illustrators of Scripture, but which we should prefer to consider

as the 'nose-jewel,' when a ring is not expressly mentioned. It is a thin circular plate of gold, frequently a coin, about the size of half a crown piece, and in appearance not unlike the large fancy buttons which decorated the coats of a past generation. A turquoise is often set in the centre over the pin by which it is attached to the side of the nose, where its appearance is sufficiently striking, and it always seemed to us much less pleasing than even the nose-ring.—*Pict. Bible.*



NOSE-RING.

—¶ *Two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold.*—¶ That is, about four ounces and a half, which seems an extraordinary weight for a pair of bracelets. But they are worn as heavy, or indeed, much heavier, in the East, resembling, as Chardin remarks, rather manacles than bracelets. They are sometimes flat in shape, but more usually round or semicircular, taking a cubical form at the section where they open to admit the hand. They have no fastenings, but open and compress by their own elasticity alone; they are, in fact, enormous rings, which we have

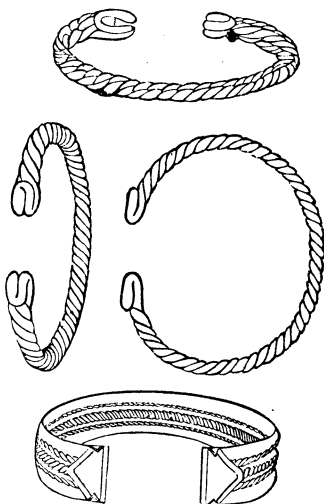
23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

often seen not less than an inch in diameter; but their weight, although great, is not commensurate to their size, as they are usually hollow. The weight which a woman carries on her arms is, however, not to be estimated by that of a single pair of bracelets; for no woman who can possibly get more is contented with one pair. It is not unusual to see five or six bracelets on the same arm, covering it from the wrist nearly to the elbow. These and their other ornaments form the sole wealth of the bulk of the women; and they are anxious, on all occasions, to accumulate it, and loath to part with it; hence, on comparatively poor women, living and dressing meanly, it is not so uncommon to see a considerable quantity of precious metal in the ornaments of her head-dress, and of her arms and ankles; and whatever ornaments she possesses are not treasured up to be produced on grand occasions, but are worn daily as parts of her ordinary costume. Thus she puts all her bracelets on her arms at once, all her anklets on her legs, and all her ear-rings in her ears. Such ornaments form her whole personal wealth, and on their value she rests her claim to permanent consideration. This is particularly the case with the Bedouin females, who are generally well supplied with all kinds of trinkets of personal ornament; for although the Arab cares little about his own dress, he is anxious to deck his wife as richly as possible, that honor may be reflected upon himself, and his circumstances properly estimated. The use of ornaments on all occasions seems to explain why Eliezer placed the nose-ring at once on the nose of Rebekah, and the bracelets on her hands, instead of giving them to

24 And she said unto him 'I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor

\* ch. 22. 23.

her as things to be treasured up. The material of the bracelets is exceedingly various. Gold is necessarily rare; silver is the most common, but many that seemed to be silver, we have found to be plated steel. Amber, coral, mother-of-pearl, and beads, are also used for bracelets, particularly for the upper part of the arm, for, whatever be the material of the others, it is usually desired that the one on the wrist should be of silver. The poorer sort of women are, however, often obliged to content themselves with rings of copper, horn, common glass beads, and other articles of inferior description. Estimating the gold by its weight, nearly five ounces, Eliezer's present was altogether very valuable.'—*Pict. Bible.*



BRACELETS.

25 She said, moreover, unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man <sup>d</sup> bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, 'Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of <sup>f</sup> his mercy and his truth: I *being* in the way, the LORD <sup>g</sup> led me to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told *them* of her mother's house these things.

29 ¶ And Rebekah had a bro-

<sup>d</sup> ver. 52. Exod. 4. 31. <sup>e</sup> Exod. 18. 10. Ruth 4. 14. 1 Sam. 25. 32, 39. 2 Sam. 18. 28. Luke 1. 68. <sup>f</sup> ch. 32. 10. Ps. 98. 3. <sup>g</sup> ver. 48.

25. *Straw and provender.*—'The straw תֵּבֶן *teben*, Arab *tibn*, seems to have been 'cut straw,' to render it more portable. The Septuagint renders it by *αχνα*, *chaff*, which is a name applied to straw after it has been cut fine by the use of a chaff-cutter. The 'provender' was, it would seem, a mixture of several kinds of fodder, cut-straw, barley, beans, &c. so combined as to render the whole palatable. The original word is מִסְפָּה *mispo*, which the Septuagint translates by *χορρασματα*, which is a derivative from *χορρος* *grass*, and hence signifies *fodder*, of which herbage is the principal ingredient. *Hay* is not made in the East. Cattle continue at the present day to be fed with chopped straw mixed with barley. The common reader would suppose the 'straw' to be for litter; but straw is never so employed in the East; dung, dried and potted, being used for that purpose.'—*Pict. Bible*.

27. *And he said, Blessed, &c.* If this was a vocal, and not a mental prayer, we must suppose that it was uttered while Rebekah was running to inform her family of what had happened. For it appears, from v. 48, that he made use of the expression 'which led me in the

ther, and his name *was* <sup>h</sup> Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the ear-ring, and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man, and behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said, Come in, <sup>i</sup> thou blessed of the LORD, wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 29. 5. <sup>i</sup> ch. 26. 29. Judg. 17. 2. Ruth 3. 10. Ps. 115. 15.

right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son;' but it is by no means to be imagined that he would have spoken those words in her hearing. It would be difficult to point out a more striking instance of one who 'acknowledged God in all his ways,' than we behold in this pious domestic. He neither takes any step without prayer, nor receives any favor without praise.—¶ *Hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth.* Heb. 'Hath not left off his mercy and his truth from with my lord.'

28. *And the damsel ran.* That is, as intimated above, while Eliezer was worshipping.—¶ *Told them of her mother's house.* Because her mother and the females had apartments or tents separate from those of the men. Daughters, too, are naturally more familiar with their mothers than their fathers, particularly in the East.

30. *When he saw the ear-rings and bracelets, &c.* From what we afterwards learn of Laban, it is not perhaps doing him injustice to suppose that the golden ornaments had great influence in prompting a behavior which had the appearance of being highly disinterest-

32 ¶ And the man came into the house: and ungirded his camels, and<sup>k</sup> gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him.

33 And there was set *meat* before him to eat: but he said, <sup>1</sup> I will not eat until I have told my errand. And he said, Speak on.

<sup>k</sup> ch. 43. 24. Judg. 19. 21. <sup>1</sup> Job. 23. 12. John. 4. 34. Eph. 6. 5, 6, 7.

ed and generous. His whole history shows him to have been a mercenary man, and quite susceptible to the impressions which the display of great wealth would make upon a covetous mind. But, whatever were his motives, his treatment of the servant was kind. Finding him at the well, modestly waiting for a farther invitation, he accosts him in language that would have befitted the lips of a much better man; 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord,' &c.

32. *The man came into the house; and ungirded his camels, &c.* A somewhat inaccurate rendering, owing to the fact, undoubtedly, that the Heb. is often wanting in precision in making transitions from one part of a narrative to another. It often omits a nominative where the scope of the context enables the reader easily to supply it. Here there is no doubt that Laban is the subject of the verb, and our translation ought to have inserted 'he' before 'ungirded;' for it would have been a gross lack of civility to have made Eliezer unload and feed his own camels. The old Geneva version is more correct:—'And he (to wit, Laban—*marg.*) unsaddled the camels and brought,' &c. We are to understand, therefore, that Laban, or those who acted by his orders, performed the service here mentioned. The original for 'ungirded' (יִפְחַתּוּ *yephattah*) properly signifies *he opened*, by which is meant the *loosing* of the travelling gear, and taking off the burdens of the camels. A

34 And he said, I *am* Abraham's servant.

35 And the LORD<sup>m</sup> hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah, my master's wife,

<sup>m</sup> ver. 1. ch. 13. 2.

similar usage occurs 1 Kings 20. 11 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that *putteth it off*;' Heb. As he that *openeth it*. Ps. 102. 20, 'To *loose* those that are appointed to death;' Heb. To *open* those, &c. Jer. 40. 4, 'Behold I *loose* thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand;' Heb. I *open* thee.—¶ *Water to wash his feet.* See Note on Gen. 18. 4.

33. *There was set meat before him.* Or, 'he set,' i. e. Laban; as the original has a double reading to afford both senses. Gr. *παρεθηκεν*, *he set*. Chal. 'They set.' The word 'meat' or 'food,' which is wanting in the Heb. is to be supplied in rendering.—¶ *He said I will not eat until, &c.* How does the character of this devoted servant brighten with every new circumstance introduced into this beautiful narrative! So full is his heart of his errand, so much does he prefer his master's interest to his own comfort or gratification, that he will not eat till he has discharged his mission! He esteems his work more to him than his necessary food. Such is the feeling of every true servant of God. 'I will not give sleep to mine eyes,' says David, 'nor slumber to mine eyelids, till I find out a place for Jehovah, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.' 'A striking illustration of this is furnished by Mr. Frazer, who, in his work, the 'Kuzzilbash,' and its sequel, 'The Persian Adventurer,' has noticed many oriental usages which were but

<sup>n</sup> bare a son to my master when she was old: and <sup>o</sup> unto him hath he given all that he hath.

37 And my <sup>p</sup> master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

38 <sup>q</sup> But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 <sup>r</sup> And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

40 <sup>s</sup> And he said unto me, the LORD, <sup>t</sup> before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and pros-

<sup>n</sup> ch. 21. 2. <sup>o</sup> ch. 21. 10. & 25. 5. <sup>p</sup> ver. 3.  
<sup>q</sup> ver. 4. <sup>r</sup> ver. 5. <sup>s</sup> ver. 7. <sup>t</sup> ch. 17. 1.

little known in this country. The Persian noble, Ishmael Khan, having occasion to claim the protection of an Affghaun chief, who was known to dislike the Persians, was advised to throw himself upon the protection of this formidable person, and claim his safe-conduct as a boon of hospitality. In reply, Ishmael observed,—‘I might take the sanctuary of his table. The Affghauns, I believe, regard it as sacredly as we Persians.’ ‘No,’ replied he, ‘that is not the Affghaun custom; but they have a custom which is of equal sacredness and force; they term it *nunnawautee*. If you desire to receive a favor from any man among these clans, be he khan or ryot, you must repair before him, and proclaim yourself his guest; but at the same time declare that you will accept of no office of hospitality; that you will neither taste of his salt, nor share his carpet, unless he consents to grant your request; and this request, so demanded, be it for protection only, or for more efficient assistance, he cannot, consistently with Affghaun honor, deny, provided it be at all within the bounds of reason.’ *Pict. Bible*.

36. When she was old. Heb. אֶתֶּרֶר

per thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house.

41 <sup>u</sup> Then shalt thou be clear from *this* mine oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee *one*, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, <sup>v</sup> O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

43 <sup>w</sup> Behold I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

<sup>u</sup> ver. 8. <sup>v</sup> ver. 12. <sup>w</sup> ver. 13.

זְקִנְתָּהּ *ahare ziknatah*, after her old age, a very striking expression, emphatically implying her natural incapacity to become a mother. The usual phrase would be ‘in her old age.’—‘*Hath he given all that he hath*. That is, *hath he purposed to give*: for the *actual* giving did not occur till some time after this, Gen. 25. 5.

37. My master made me swear. Heb. יִשְׁבַּעְנִי *yashbiani*, adjured me. Eliezer did not swear otherwise than in being sworn. See on v. 3.

38. But thou shalt go. Heb. אַתָּה לֹא תֵלֵךְ *im lo telek*, if thou shalt not go. An imprecatory mode of speech, in which part of the sentence is understood. See the idiom explained in the Note on Gen. 21. 23. Gr. ἀλλὰ πορεύσῃ, but thou shalt go.

40. Before whom I walk. Heb. אֲשֶׁר הִיָּחַלְלָכִי *asher hihallakti lepanav*, before whom I have walked. That is, before whom I have habitually walked in a way of obedience. Gr. ἐνεχρίσθησά ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ, whom I have pleased before him. The idea of acceptable walking is undoubtedly implied.

41. Clear from my oath. Heb. מֵאֵלֶתֶר *mealathi*, fi *in* my execration or curse



44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: *let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.*

45 \* And before I had done <sup>r</sup> speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water*: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder*, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter *art* thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom she bare unto him: and I <sup>z</sup> put the ear-ring upon

\* ver. 15, &c. <sup>r</sup> 1 Sam. 1. 13. <sup>z</sup> Ezek. 16. 11, 12.

Gr. *ορκισμον id.* In the corresponding passage, v. 8, it is *שבעתרי shebuathi, my oath*; but an oath naturally implies an imprecation of evil to him who fails to perform it.

48. *My master's brother's daughter.* Rebekah was not Abraham's brother's daughter, but grand-daughter. Here too Bethuel, who was Abraham's nephew, is called his brother, as Lot was before.

49. *That I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.* That is, that I may go some other way in order to fulfil the obligation of my oath.

50. *The thing proceedeth from the Lord.* Heb. *יצא הדבר yatzah davar, the word cometh forth from the Lord.* It appears to be the divine will and pleasure.—¶ *Cannot speak unto thee bad or good.* That is, cannot say any thing at all against the measure. Comp. Gen. 31. 24.

51, *Take her, and go, and let her be, &c.* 'The whole conduct of this affair

her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 <sup>a</sup> And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take <sup>b</sup> my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

49 And now if ye will <sup>c</sup> deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered, and said, <sup>d</sup> The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot <sup>e</sup> speak unto thee bad or good.

51 Behold, Rebekah is <sup>f</sup> before thee, take *her*, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

<sup>a</sup> ver. 26. <sup>b</sup> ch. 22. 23. <sup>c</sup> ch. 47. 29. Josh. 2. 14. <sup>d</sup> Ps. 118. 23. Matt. 21. 42. Mark. 12. 11. <sup>e</sup> ch. 31. 24. <sup>f</sup> ch. 20. 15.

is calculated to surprise an European reader. A servant is sent on a distant journey, with full powers to select a wife and conclude a marriage for his master's son. The servant addresses himself to the lady's father and brother, and they agree to his proposals without consulting Rebekah. The agent makes valuable presents to the lady and her relations, and carries her away, and Isaac and Rebekah meet as man and wife without having ever seen each other before. But all this is most precisely analogous to usages which still prevail in the East, with some small diversity in different nations. We will state the process of a marriage of a young couple in Persia, which seems, on the whole, to present a very close parallel to this patriarchal procedure. When a young man becomes marriageable, his parents begin to look about among *their kindred* and acquaintance for a suitable partner for him, frequently assisting their inquiries or leaving the

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he <sup>s</sup> worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

53 And the servant brought forth <sup>b</sup> jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He gave also to her bro-

<sup>s</sup> ver. 26 <sup>b</sup> Exod. 3. 22. & 11. 2. & 12. 35.

matter entirely to a confidential servant—generally the young man's old nurse, who goes about from house to house, and having found a suitable object, endeavors to create a mutual prepossession by speaking to each of the other. Very often, however, the whole matter is concluded without any reference to the parties most immediately interested. When the parents have found a suitable female, they proceed to the house of her father, and make their overtures to him; and if they are acceptable, he denotes his acquiescence by ordering sweetmeats to be brought. A few days after, another meeting is held at the same place, and there it is finally settled what the parents of the young man are to give in his behalf to the bride [for the principle of such gifts, see Note on Gen. 34. 12]; and this is a matter of great importance, as these presents remain with the lady, and form her dower or provision in case of a divorce from her husband. It consists of fine dresses and shawls [*raiment* in the text, v. 53], with female ornaments, some money, and a complete outfit of domestic utensils. Among some of the Arab tribes, the present or dower received for the bride on such occasions is called the 'five articles,' and consists of a carpet, a silver nose-ring, a silver neck-chain, silver bracelets, and a camel-bag. As to the consent of the woman, the usage varies in different nations. In Persia, after all has been concluded, the woman has nominally the power, almost never exercised, of expressing her dissent before the con-

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ther and to her mother 'precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that *were* with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, <sup>k</sup> Send me away unto my master.

55 And her brother and her

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. 21. 3. Ezra 1. 6. <sup>k</sup> ver. 56, & 59.

nexion receives its final sanction; but among many Bedouin tribes, the woman is seldom suffered to know, until the betrothing ceremonies announce it to her, who is to be her husband, and then she has no power of negating the contract; but she may, if she pleases, withdraw the day after her marriage from her husband's tent to that of her father; and, being divorced, is thenceforward regarded as a widow. In the instance before us, it does not appear to us that the consent of Rebekah was required to her own marriage. The question which was asked her the next day—'Wilt thou go with this man?' (v. 58)—we consider to mean no more than to ask whether she were willing to set out so soon as Eliezer desired, or would rather insist on staying a few days longer with her relations as they had wished.—*Pict. Bible*.

53. *Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, &c.* Heb. כֶּלֶי כֶּסֶף *kele keseph, vessels of silver, &c.* The original for 'jewels' (vessels) is a word of large import, being applied to implements, instruments, and utensils of all kinds.—¶ *Precious things.* Heb. מִגְדָּנוֹת *migdanoth, dainties.* גֻּפָּא *gupa gifts.* But from comparison of other places where the term or its kindred מִגְדָּא *megea* occurs, particularly Deut. 33. 13.—15. Cant. 4. 13, & 2 Chron. 21. 3.—32.23. Ezra, 1. 6, it seems to denote *the precious or dainty fruits of the earth.*

55. *A few days, at the least ten* Heb. עֲשָׂרָה יָמִים אֲדָמָה *yamim o asor, lit. days or ten.* Our marginal rendering is, 'a full year, or ten months,' which is favored by the Chaldee Targums, but we

mother said, Let the damsel abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten ; after that she shall go.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way : send me away, that I may go to my master.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and

said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man ? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and <sup>1</sup> her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister ; be thou <sup>m</sup> *the mother* of thousands of millions, and <sup>n</sup> let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

<sup>1</sup> ch. 35. 8.    <sup>m</sup> ch. 17. 16.    <sup>n</sup> ch. 22. 17.

believe the English version expresses the true idea of the original.

57. *Inquire at her mouth.* The case being somewhat difficult, and neither of the parties disposed to disoblige the other, they agree to leave it to the decision of the damsel herself. A few days to take leave of her friends would, no doubt, have been desirable to her ; but seeing so much of God in the affair, and the man's heart so deeply set upon it ; feeling also her own heart entirely in it, she determines to throw no hindrance in the way, and therefore answers free from all affectation, ' I will go. — ' Do people wish to know the truth of any thing which has been reported of another, they say, ' Let us go and inquire of his *mouth*. ' — ' Let us hear the *birth* of his *mouth*. ' Do servants ask a favor of their mistress, she will say, ' I know not what will be the birth of the master's *mouth* ; I will inquire at his *mouth*. ' So the mother and brother of Rebecca inquired at the *mouth* of the damsel, whether she felt willing to go with the man. ' And she said, I will go. ' — *Roberts.*

59. *And her nurse.* The name of this nurse was Deborah. We hear no more of her till we are told of her death. She appears to have survived her mistress, and to have died in the family of Jacob, much lamented. ' How often have scenes like this led my mind to the patriarchal age ! The daughter is about for the *first time* to leave the paternal roof : the servants are all in confusion ;

each refers to things long gone by, each wishes to do something to attract the attention of his young mistress. One says, ' Ah ! do not forget him who nursed you when an infant. ' another, ' How often did I bring you the beautiful lotus from the distant tank ! Did I not always conceal your faults ? ' The mother comes to take leave. She weeps, and tenderly embraces her, saying, ' My daughter, I shall see you no more ; — Forget not your mother. ' The brother infolds his sister in his arms, and promises soon to come and see her. The father is absorbed in thought, and is only aroused by the sobs of the party. He then affectionately embraces his daughter, and tells her not to fear. The female domestics must each *smell* of the poor girl, and the men touch her feet. As Rebecca had her *nurse* to accompany her, so, at *this* day, the *Aya* (the *nurse*) who has from infancy brought up the bride, goes with her to the new scene. She is her adviser, her assistant, and friend ; and to her will she tell all her hopes and all her fears. ' — *Roberts*

60. *Blessed Rebekah.* Implored, invoked a blessing upon her, to wit, what immediately follows, that she might be indefinitely multiplied in her seed. See on Gen. 17. 16. ' From the numerous instances which are recorded in the scriptures, of those who were aged, or holy, giving their *blessing*, may be seen the importance which was attached to such benedictions. Has a son, or a

61 ¶ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way

of the well of Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out <sup>p</sup> to meditate in the field at the even-tide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming.

<sup>o</sup> ch. 16. 14. & 25. 11. <sup>p</sup> Josh. 1. 8. Ps. 1. 2. & 77. 12. & 119. 15. & 143. 5.

daughter, to leave a father, an aged friend, or a priest, a *blessing* is always given. To be the mother of a numerous progeny is considered a great honor. Hence parents often say to their daughters, 'Be thou the mother of thousands.' Beggars, also, when relieved, say to the mistress of the house, 'Ah! madam, millions will come from you.' Roberts.——¶ *Thou art our sister.* 'I his should rather have been rendered, 'O thou, our sister!' It is not, according to the Heb. accents, a proposition, but an exclamation.——¶ *Be thou the mother of thousands.* Heb. *חַיִּי אֶלְפֵי רַבְבָּהּ hayi alphe rebabah, be thou to thousands of millions.* This, according to the Jewish writers, is the form of the ancient solemn benediction which was wont to be pronounced upon the bride when she was taken home to her future husband.—It is remarked by Arbp. Secker that when our translators make *רבבה rebabah*, a determinate number, they elsewhere render it 10,000; but here and Ezek. 16. 7. *a million.* The term properly denotes any large indefinite number.——¶ *Let thy seed possess the gate, &c.* That is, have their enemies in their power, as explained Gen. 22. 17. As these are the very terms of the last blessing pronounced from heaven on Abraham ch. 22. 17, they had probably been made acquainted with that blessing either by Abraham's servant, or previously in some other way.

61. Arose. See Note on Gen. 23. 3. —¶ *And her damsels.* Given as a part of her marriage portion. As nothing was said of them in v. 59, this affords another instance of the usage mention-

ed above, by which a circumstance omitted in one part of a narrative is distinctly related in another.

62. *Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi.* Heb. *בָּא מִבְּרֵא בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי ba mibbo bear lahai roi, came from the coming, i. e. from the usually travelled way to and from the well of Lahai-roi.* The phraseology in the original is unwonted and obscure, and we have accordingly a great variety of renderings in the versions. Gr. 'Walked through the wilderness of the well of vision.' Chal. 'Came from the well whereat the Angel of life appeared to him.' Arab. 'Had returned from the journey to the well of the Living One that seeth.' Vulg. 'Walked along the way that leadeth to the well of the Living and the Seeing, so called.' From all this, and from its being said, ch. 25. 11, that 'Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi,' which was somewhat to the south of Canaan, v. 63, we gather that Isaac was now residing for the most part in the vicinity of that memorable well, or at least that he was frequently passing to and fro (מִבְּרֵא) between that place and Beer-sheba; and that, having now come to the latter place, the dwelling of his aged father, in expectation of meeting his bride, he took occasion, while waiting there, to walk out into the fields at the close of the day, when the incidents related in the text occurred.

63. *Went out to meditate.* Heb. *יָצָא לַשְׁמֵר yetze lasuah, went out to meditate, contemplate, or pray.* Gr. *ἀδολεσχησαι to exercise himself; i. e. religiously; to give scope to the pious sentiments of his heart in a retired place, at the tran-*

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, <sup>a</sup>she lighted off the camel.

65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail and covered herself.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. 15. 18.

quail hour of twilight, when the soul is most disposed for devout contemplations. As meditation and prayer are the right improvement of mercies past, so they are the best preparative for mercies yet expected. Isaac could not have put himself in a more suitable posture for welcoming the anticipated blessing, than that in which he is here represented, nor in one which would have been more apt to ensure its being made substantial and durable. As a general fact, it may safely be affirmed that those husbands and wives are likely to prove the greatest blessings to each other, whose union is brought about in answer to prayer. 'A prudent wife is from the Lord.'

64. *She lighted off the camel.* 'Isaac was walking, and it would therefore have been the highest breach of oriental good manners to have remained on the camel when presented to him. No doubt, they all alighted and walked to meet him, conducting Rebecca as a bride to meet the bridegroom. It is a customary mark of respect to great personages for a person to alight from the animal on which he is riding, and lead it until the superior has ridden by; and as no conventional superiority is in the East conceded to women, as in Europe, this will show that it would have been highly improper to have rode directly up to Isaac when he was on foot. This would have been treating him as an inferior. In Persia, on occasions when it is thought necessary to stand upon punctilio, two persons of equal rank, after having been riding side by

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac <sup>r</sup> was comforted after his mother's death.

<sup>r</sup> ch. 38. 12.

side, will take care, when both dismount, that it shall be done at precisely the same moment; for he whose foot first touches the ground is considered to admit his inferiority to the other.'—*Pict. Bible.*

65. *Took a veil, &c.* The veil might, in the present instance, answer a double purpose; (1) It would express her subjection to her husband, as being already in fact his espoused wife. (2) It would prevent that confusion which the exposure of her person, especially in so sudden and unexpected a manner, must have occasioned. 'Whether veiled before or not, she now covered herself—her whole person—with the ample enveloping veil with which brides are still conducted to the bridegroom. Rosenmuller, in illustration of this passage, quotes an ancient father (Tertullian), who, with an express reference to the same text, observes, as a custom still existing in his time, that the heathen brides were also conducted to their husbands covered with a veil. It is still all but universal in the East, and it will be observed that it is used not only by the females whose faces are always concealed, both before and after marriage, but by those who display part or the whole of their faces on all ordinary occasions. It is, in fact, the indispensable costume for the occasion. Whether the bridal veil was distinguished from other veils does not appear, but we observe that one of red silk or muslin is affected by the Persians on such an occasion, although the ordinary veils are white or

## CHAPTER XXV.

THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

blue; and Dr. Russel, in his account of a Maronite marriage, observes that the bride's veil was of the same color. Thus we see that Rebekah, by enveloping her person in a veil, put herself into the costume usual for a bride when conducted to the tent or house of her husband.—*Pict. Bible.* \*

67. *And he loved her.* 'The force of this first expression of such an attachment seems to have escaped notice. Isaac, from all that appears, was the only one of the patriarchs who had no opportunity of exhibiting a preference to his wife before marriage. He had never seen her till she stood unveiled in his tent as his wife. It seemed, therefore, necessary to add, that 'he loved her' when he did see her. It is remarkable, that what merely arose from circumstances in the case of Isaac, is now amply illustrated by the established practices of the East. The women being completely secluded, and never seen without veils, no opportunity of personal acquaintance, or even of inspection before marriage, is afforded. The man sees his wife for the first time unveiled when he enters the room into which she has been received on her arrival at his house. Having previously formed no idea of her person and qualifications, but from the general and exaggerated praises of the old nurse, who is usually his agent, this is a critical and anxious moment; and it is a most happy circumstance for both, when the account of such a transaction can conclude with the emphatic words 'he loved her.' *Pict. Bible.* Thus the comfort of a wife was made to compensate for the loss of a mother. God, in infinite wisdom, saw fit to set a day of prosperity over against a day of adversity. Now he wounds our spirits by dissolving one tender union, and now binds up our wounds by ce-

5\*

2 And \*she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.

\* 1 Chron. 1. 32.

menting another. But while these vicissitudes occur, let us remember that the transition from the character of a dutiful son to that of a kind and affectionate husband, is natural and easy, and that he that fills up one station in life with credit and honor, is thereby prepared for all those that follow.—¶ *Was comforted after his mother's death.* Heb. אָהָרָה אִמּוֹ *ahare immo*, after his mother; an elliptical mode of expression not unusual in the Hebrew. Gr. *περὶ Σαρρας τῆς μητρός αὐτοῦ*, concerning Sarah his mother. The interval between her death and his marriage was three years, during the whole of which period he had cherished towards his deceased parent all those mournful and tender regrets which would naturally spring up in the bosom of the most devoted filial affection.

## CHAPTER XXV.

1. *Then again Abraham took a wife.* Heb. יִסְתָּ וַיִּקַּח יֹסֶפֶת *yoseph vayikkah*, added and took. In 1 Chron. 1. 32, Keturah is called Abraham's concubine, and if such were the fact, it gives no little countenance to the idea of Calvin and other commentators, that she had been assumed into this relation before Sarah's death; for if she were married after that event, we know not how to account for the fact of her being thus ranked as a concubine or secondary wife. If Sarah were dead, why did she not come fully into her place as principal wife? The silence of Moses about her pedigree favors this opinion. As it is wholly improbable that Abraham would make an alliance with any family of the Canaanites, and equally so that any princess of Canaan would accept of him in his old age, when the whole inheritance was to go to Sarah's son, we seem to be warranted in the belief that Keturah was

3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

his concubine, taken, doubtless, from among the servants of his family. According to the standard of morality then acknowledged, might he not have cohabited with her without any imputation on his continence, before Sarah's death? Was the interval sufficient, between Sarah's death and Abraham's, for six sons to be born to him of one woman, and grow up to manhood, when manhood hardly took place before the age of thirty at the soonest? In the charge given by Abraham to the servant in the preceding chapter, he talks like an old man preparing to leave the world. Is it likely that after this he should take a concubine and beget six children? There is nothing in the original properly answering to the word 'then' at the commencement of the verse, or to mark succession. True, the incident comes in out of its proper order, but this is very common with the sacred penmen, and here the reason may have been, that the writer wished to carry on the history of the *great and prominent* events of Abraham's life uninterrupted by minor details, till he had reached the consummation of Isaac's marriage. He then, before giving an account of Abraham's death, and the settlement of his family, goes back, by way of brief preface, to the circumstance of his having, some years before, taken a concubine, by whom he had several children. This view of the matter is still farther confirmed by the fact that Paul speaks of Abraham's begetting Isaac when he was as good as dead. The birth of a son at such an advanced age was out of the ordinary course of nature; it was nothing short of a miracle. If then he had six sons born to him after he was one hundred and forty years of age, must it not have been in consequence of the *miraculous* continu-

4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephher, and Hanoah, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

ance of his physical vigor? For how could he be said to be the father of six children *in* the course of nature at one hundred and forty, when it is expressly said that Isaac was born to him *out of* the course of nature at one hundred? For these reasons, we have little hesitation in supposing that the verse would be more correctly rendered, 'And Abraham *had* taken in addition (another) wife, and her name was Keturah.' 'It seems to us,' says the editor of the Pict. Bible, 'that the current usages of the East give great probability to this conjecture, which is strengthened by considering the great age of Abraham when Sarah died; and that his sons by Keturah were old enough to be sent away to form independent clans before his own death.'

2. *And she bare him Zimran and Jokshan, &c.* Of some of these nations we have no further account in the sacred volume, and but very doubtful traces in profane history. From Medan descended the Medanites, Gen. 37. 36, (on which, see Note). They seem to have peopled that part of Arabia Petræa contiguous to the land of Moab, eastward of the Dead Sea. Jerome terms the people of this country *Madianeans*; and Ptolemy mentions a people called *Madianites*, who dwelt in the same region. From Midian came the Midianites, who soon after lapsed into idolatry, as is evident from the narrative contained in Num. 25. From Shuah probably came Bildad, the Shuhite, Job. 2. 11; and from Sheba, the Sabeans mentioned in the same book, ch. 1. 15, as the marauders who robbed Job of his oxen and asses.

3. *The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, &c.* As their terms are plural, if they are truly proper names, they must have been designed to denote *tribes* or *fami-*

5 ¶ And <sup>b</sup> Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

6 But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and <sup>c</sup> sent them away from Isaac his son (while he

<sup>b</sup> ch. 24. 36.    <sup>c</sup> ch. 21. 14.

*lies, and not individuals.* But the ancient versions vary from ours. Onkelos interprets the words of persons dwelling in *camps, tents, and islands*; and Jonathan ben Uzziel calls them *merchants, artificers, and heads or chiefs of people.*

5. *Gave all that he had unto Isaac.* Gave him the bulk, the principal part, of his possessions; not absolutely the whole, for we find it immediately said that he 'gave gifts' to his other sons. But as Isaac was the only son of Sarah, the free woman, and born according to promise, it was proper that he should be considered the legitimate heir, and inherit accordingly the *substance* of the estate.

6. *The sons of the concubines.* That is, of Hagar and Keturah. Of course Ishmael was included, and we thus learn incidentally that he was not lost sight of by his father, who made a better provision for him than has yet appeared in the course of the narrative. With a view, no doubt, to preserve peace among his sons, Abraham distributed all his property in his lifetime, giving the greater portion of it to Isaac, and supplying the others with cattle and materials for a domestic establishment, with advice to go and settle themselves eastward in the Arabian desert. 'The arrangement was, doubtless, satisfactory to all parties; for among the Bedouins of the present day, we observe that the son, although he treats his father with respect while in his tent, is anxious to set up an independent establishment of his own, and spares no exertion to attain it; 'and when it is obtained,' says Burckhardt, 'he listens to no advice, nor obeys any earthly command but

yet lived) eastward, unto <sup>d</sup> the east country.

7 And these *are* the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

<sup>d</sup> Judg. 6. 3.

that of his own will.' Though often too proud to ask for what his own arm may ultimately procure, he usually expects his father to make the offer of some cattle to enable him to begin life; and the omission of it occasions deep disgust, and leads to quarrels in after-times, which form the worst feature of the Bedouin character. They have few children circumstanced like those of Abraham by his concubines; but in other Asiatic nations, where parallel circumstances occur, the fathers provide for such sons much in the same way as Abraham, giving them some property proportioned to his means, with advice to go and settle at some place distant from the family seat.

*Pict. Bible.* Allusion is probably made to these descendants of Abraham under the title of 'children of the East;' Judg 6. 3, and also Job, 1. 3, where Job himself, who may have descended from this stock, is called 'the greatest of the people of the East.'

7. *These are the days of the years, &c.* A peculiar and impressive mode of computing time, as if intended to intimate that we are creatures of a day, whose life is to be reckoned rather by 'the inch of days than the ell of years.' Thus died this venerable patriarch, the father of the faithful, after having sojourned as a stranger and a pilgrim in the land of promise one hundred years. From a comparison of dates, it appears that he survived Shem twenty-five years; his father Terah, one hundred years; and his wife Sarah, thirty-eight years; that he lived after Isaac's marriage, thirty-five years; and consequently saw his two grandsons, Jacob and Esau; and finally finished his course A. M. 2183,



after the flood, 527. His life, though shorter by far than that of any of his illustrious predecessors whose history has come particularly under review, was yet much fuller of incidents and events. It was a life chequered with uncommon trials, and marked with blessings no less extraordinary; a life distinguished by the most signal virtues, yet not wholly exempted from frailties and infirmities. His chiefest happiness consisted not in his being favored with a remarkable degree of worldly prosperity, and an unusual term of years to enjoy it, but in the high distinction of being called 'the friend of God,' and made the depository of a promise in which the whole world was to be blessed. The event of his decease is but briefly related. Doubtless it would have been highly gratifying had the Spirit of God seen fit to have handed down to us some longer memorial of the death of the eminent and far-famed subject of our history. Most instructive would it have been to have stood in imagination by the side of his dying bed, and to have heard his assurances of the mercy and faithfulness of Him in whom he had believed, and who had led him through the mazes of so long a pilgrimage. Nothing of this, however, has been vouchsafed us, and, except for the purpose of our gratification, nothing of it was needed. After such a life of faith and piety, there is little need of inquiring into the manner of his death. We know that it could not have been otherwise than full of peace and hope. From the earthly, he no doubt, looked believingly forward to the heavenly Canaan, the land of immortal rest, and thither, after a long and honorable course below, we have every assurance that he was graciously received. Luke 16. 22.—¶ *Gave up the ghost and died.* Heb. יָרַע *yigva* *vayamoth*, *expired and died*; or, breathed his last and died. Gr. ἐκλείπων ἀπεθάνειν, *failing died*; from which probably originated the expression, Luke 16. 9, 'that when ye fail

(ἐκλείπητε) they may receive you, &c.' The original term גָּוַע *gava*, signifies simply *to cease from breathing, to breathe one's last, to expire*. The word does not strictly signify *to give up the soul*, in the modern sense of that phrase, any farther than as it implies that he who dies yields back his soul to Him who gave it. Hence גָּוַע *gava*, *to expire*, differs from מָוַת *muth*, *to die*, in the simple fact that it presents one of the prominent phenomena attending death, viz. the sending forth the breath without inhaling it again. The Eng. word 'ghost' is supposed to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'gast' *an inmate, inhabitant, guest*, and also *spirit*; but in popular use it is now restricted to the latter meaning. But the primitive idea seems to be that of *dismissing the soul or spirit as the guest of the body*. It is almost always rendered in our translation by 'expire,' but the present version 'giving up the ghost,' i. e. yielding up the spirit, is liable to no serious objection.—¶ *In a good old age.* Heb. בְּשִׁבְיָה טוֹבָה *beseba tobah*, *in a good hoary age*; the idea of *grey-headed age* being prominent in the original term. This was according to promise. Upwards of four score years before this, the Lord addressed Abraham in vision, Gen. 15. 15, saying, 'Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.' In every thing, even in death, the promises were fulfilled to Abraham.—¶ *Full of days.* Heb. שָׂבַע *sabea*, *full*. Our translators have supplied the word *years*, but the original signifies *full* in the sense of *satisfied, satiated*, and may as well imply here *full of blessings and comforts*. Targ. Jon. 'Saturated with all good.' The previous expressions would seem sufficient to denote the fact of his longevity. The present, we think, to be better understood of his having had in every respect, a *satisfying experience* of life; he had known both its good and its evil, its bitter and its sweet; and he now desired to live no longer; he was

8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and <sup>e</sup> died in a good old age, an old man, and full of *years*; and <sup>f</sup> was gathered to his people.

9 And <sup>g</sup> his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

<sup>a</sup> ch. 15. 15. & 49. 29. <sup>c</sup> ch. 35. 29. & 49. 33. ch. 35. 29. & 50. 13.

10 <sup>h</sup> The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the <sup>k</sup> well Lahai-roi.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 23. 16. <sup>d</sup> ch. 49. 31. <sup>j</sup> ch. 16. 14. & 24. 62.

ready and anxious to depart. It seems to be a metaphor taken from a guest regaled by a plentiful banquet, who rises from the table *satisfied and full*. Thus Seneca, remarking in one of his epistles, that he had lived long enough, says '*Mortem plenus expecto*,' *fully satisfied, I wait for death*.—¶ *Was gathered to his people*. Heb. יִאֲסָף אֶל עַמּוּרָא *yeaseph el ammar, was gathered to his people*; i. e. to his fathers, as the promise stands, Gen. 15. 15. The phrase is frequently understood as equivalent to *one's spirit being gathered to the spirits of the blessed in another world*, but it is extremely doubtful whether a strict philological induction will warrant us in affixing to it any other sense than that of being *added to the number of the dead*, without any reference to the *particular state* of departed souls. Moreover, as Abraham's ancestors were idolaters, the promise that his spirit should be gathered to theirs, would be one of very equivocal import.

9. *His sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah*. Abraham, therefore, in purchasing a grave for Sarah, was merely providing a final resting-place for himself! How certain, and often how sudden, the transition, from the funeral rites we prepare for others, to those which others prepare for us! Were we to leave out of view the spiritual and eternal blessings conferred upon Abraham, how humble would be the conclusion of so grand a career. Vision upon vision, covenant upon covenant, promise upon

promise, conducting only to a little cave in Hebron! But from the divine declaration uttered three hundred and thirty years after this event, 'I am the God of Abraham,' it appears that his relation to God was as entire at that time, as at any former period in his whole life. 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;' and the faithful of all past ages live with God, and their dust is precious in his eyes, in whatever cavern of the earth or recess of the ocean it may be deposited.—From the circumstance of Isaac and Ishmael being both present at the burial of their father, it is to be inferred that they were now living on amicable terms with each other as brethren. Though previously at variance, they now unite in sympathetic sorrow at the grave of Abraham. The latter must have been 'a wild man' indeed not to have been tamed at least into a temporary tenderness by such an event. A wise providence often works a forgetfulness of past resentments by the common calamities visited upon families and kindred. They tend to reconcile the alienated, to extinguish bitterness and strife, to rekindle the dying embers of filial duty and brotherly love. Isaac and Ishmael, men of different natures, of opposite interests, rivals from the womb, forget all animosity, and mingle tears over a father's tomb. Let the lesson thus afforded be carefully learned by all who bear the fraternal relation, and let them be admonished to go and do likewise. 'Death brings those toge-

12 ¶ Now these *are* the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, <sup>1</sup>whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham.

13 And <sup>m</sup>these *are* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations : the first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth ; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

<sup>1</sup>chap. 16. 15.    <sup>m</sup> 1 Chron. 1. 29.

ther who know not how to associate together on any other occasion, and will bring us all together, sooner or later.' —*Fuller*.

11. *God blessed Isaac*. The death and burial of so great and good a man as Abraham must have made an impression upon survivors, but it caused no interruption in the flow of the entailed and covenanted blessings of the God of Abraham. Isaac was heir to the promise, and the blessings and influences which had distinguished the father, rested on the son ; and this was a better legacy than if the patriarch had bequeathed to him all the riches and honors of the world. It was, no doubt, in consequence of his connection with the covenant that he experienced so largely of the bounties and benefactions of heaven.—¶ *Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi*. That is, he continued, after Abraham's death, to reside at the same place where he had fixed his habitation before. See on ch. 24. 62.

12. *These are the generations of Ishmael*. The historian having adverted to the blessing of God upon Isaac, here pauses before proceeding with the sequel of *his* history, to show how exactly the promises made to Ishmael, ch. 17. 20, were also fulfilled. His descendants, like those of Isaac, branched out into twelve tribes, and constituted the bulk of the population which spread over the Arabian peninsula.—An interesting view of their history consid-

14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah :

16 These *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles ; <sup>n</sup> twelve princes according to their nations.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 17. 20.

ered in its connection with the antecedent prophecies, will be found in Forster's 'Mahometanism unveiled,' vol. I. p. 113—161.

13. *According to their generations*. That is, says Jarchi, *according to the order of their births*, which Rosenmuller pronounces the correct interpretation.

16. *By their towns*. Heb. בְּחִצְרֵיהֶם *behatzrehem*, by or in their villages. Both these terms, 'town' and 'village,' naturally convey to the reader the idea rather of European than of Asiatic modes of habitation, but the want of appropriate terms in our language to answer to the original, renders this unavoidable. Michaelis derives the word from an obsolete Heb. root חָצַר *hatzar*, the Arabic equivalent of which *hazara* still exists, signifying *to surround, to encircle, to environ*. From this radical meaning he deduces for the noun *hatzar* the sense of a portable village of the Nomades, consisting of tents placed in a circle, usually denominated by the Tartar word *horde*, (Arab. *Oordu*, Gr. *ορδα*, *ourda*), which was brought into Europe by the Mogul conquerors upwards of five centuries ago. The term occurs in the same sense and in respect to the same people, Is. 42. 11, 'Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages (חִצְרֵים) that Kedar doth inhabit : ' where the *villages* appear to be something different from the *cities*. Thus also, Josh. 13. 23, 28, where cities\* and adjacent villages are attributed to the

17 And these *are* the years of the life of Ishmael. an hundred and thirty and seven years: and ° he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people.

° ver. 8.

tribes of Reuben and Gad on the east of the Jordan, whose habits were probably, from their local situation, more nomadic than those of their brethren in Canaan proper. It is natural to suppose, however, that such villages or encampments would, in process of time, be transformed to more stable and fixed dwelling-places, and it may be that the word in the present case is intended to be used in that sense.—¶

*By their castles.* Heb. בִּטְרוֹת *betiroth*. The precise distinction between the import of this term and the former is not easily ascertained. The primary sense of the root טָרַח *toor* is *order, regularity*; and though not used as a verb, yet as a noun it is employed to signify *a row, range, orderly disposition*, as in Ex. 28. 17, 18. 1 Kings, 6. 36. 2 Chron. 4. 3, 13. The present term טִירָח *tirah* is usually rendered either *castle* or *palace*, perhaps from the *orderly rows or tiers* of stones of which such buildings were composed. Indeed, Parkhurst suggests very plausibly that both the Eng. 'tier' and 'tower' as well as the Lat. 'turris,' are to be traced to this root as their origin. The Gr. renders it by *σταλεις*, which Michaelis and Rosenmüller are inclined to interpret of *stalls for cattle*. But the leading usage of the original rather favors the sense of *towers, citadels, or fortified places*, although without a more accurate knowledge of the ancient civil life of the Ishmaelitic nomades, we may be unable to define precisely the class of buildings intended.—¶ *Twelve princes according to their nations.* That is, twelve chiefs or heads of tribes (Phylarchs) corresponding to the number of tribes.

17. *These are the years of the life, &c.*

18 <sup>p</sup> And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that *is* before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: *and* he died <sup>a</sup> in the presence of all his brethren.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Sam. 15. 7.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 16. 12.

This account of Ishmael's death, as well as that of Abraham's above, is inserted by anticipation, in order that the subsequent history of Isaac might not be interrupted. In point of fact, though the circumstance of his death is stated *before* the birth of Jacob and Esau, yet it did not happen till some years *afterwards*. Abraham lived till they were fifteen years old, and Ishmael till they were sixty-three. His death occurred A. M. 2231, 573 years after the flood, 48 years after the death of Abraham, and when Isaac was 123. There is, perhaps, no good reason to doubt that Ishmael died in the faith of his father Abraham, and was received to the same reward in another world.

18. *And they dwelt.* Gr. κατοικησε, *he dwelt*; as if the translators understood the term of Ishmael, but still taken collectively, as including his descendants. This is strictly according to the *usus loquendi* of the scriptures, and the version we regard as a good one. 'They,' therefore, in this clause of the verse is, we conceive, perfectly equivalent to 'he' in the subsequent one, on which see note below.—¶ *From Havilah unto Shur.* There are undoubtedly different countries referred to in scripture under the name of Havilah. See Note on Gen. 2. 11. The allusion here seems to be to a region lying on the west border of the Persian Gulf, and the statement of the sacred writer is, that Ishmael's descendants spread themselves over the tract extending from this region in the east, to the desert of Shur in the west, which was adjacent to the land of Egypt.—¶ *He died in the presence of all his brethren.* Heb. נָפַל *naphal, he fell*. As Ishmael's death has already

19 ¶ And these *are* the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son :  
 ' Abraham begat Isaac :

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife,  
 ' the daughter of Bethuel the Syr-

• Matt 1. 2.

• ch. 22. 23.

been mentioned, and as the term 'fall' is seldom used in the Scriptures in reference to 'dying,' except in cases of sudden and violent death, as where one 'falls' in battle, the probability is that it here signifies that his territory or possessions *fell* to him in the presence of his brethren, or immediately contiguous to their borders. Accordingly the Gr. and the Chal. both render it, 'And he *dwelt* before his brethren;' evidently regarding it as the fulfilment of the promise, ch. 16. 12, 'And he *shall dwell* in the presence of his brethren.' Moreover, as tribes and nations are often called by the names of their individual founders, as Israel, Moab, Midian, &c., and as the rest of the verse speaks solely of the *posterity* of Ishmael, we doubt not that 'he' is a collective term, referring not to Ishmael personally, but to the body of his descendants. We would therefore render the clause, 'They fell (i. e. their lot or inheritance *fell to them*) in the presence of all their brethren.' A similar usage of the term occurs Num. 34. 2, 'This is the land that shall *fall* unto you for an inheritance.' Josh. 23. 4, 'Behold I have *divided unto you by lot* these nations that remain;' Heb. 'I have *caused to fall* unto you.' Ps. 78. 55, '*Divided them* an inheritance.' Ps. 16. 6, 'The lines *are fallen* unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.' If the passage be taken literally as it reads, it is difficult to understand what is meant by his 'dying in the presence of all his brethren.' 'Brethren' must be taken in the wide sense of kindred or relatives in general, for he had but *one* brother strictly so called,

ian of Padan-aram, 'the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren :  
 " and the LORD was entreated of him,  
 and " Rebekah his wife conceived.

' ch. 24. 29. " 1 Chron. 5. 20. 2 Chron. 33  
 13. Ezra 8. 23. " Rom. 9. 10.

and if it include the general stock of his kindred, how can we suppose that they were all convened from distant regions on this occasion?—especially as it was predicted that he and they should sustain a hostile relation to each other

19. *And these are the generations, &c.* That is, not only the history of his offspring, the genealogy of his descendants, but also of the leading occurrences and events that happened to him in the course of his life.—See Note on Gen. 2. 4. It is a kind of inscription or title to the whole narrative, which runs on from this place to the end of ch. 35.

21. *Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, &c.* The history having now returned to the son of promise, we should suppose, from the situation in which we left him, v. 11, that nothing was wanting to complete his earthly felicity. We should, at any rate, have supposed, that as the promise respected principally the multiplication of his seed, the great number of his children would have made a prominent part of his history. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. Though now possessed of the bulk of his father's property, confirmed by God as the sole and undisputed heir of the covenant promise, and enjoying with Rebekah <sup>at</sup> the tender endearments of the most hal-  
 lowed union—yet one thing was wanting, in the lack of which, his conjugal and domestic bliss still left his mind a prey to corroding anxieties. His wife was barren, and he was childless. While Abraham's other sons abounded in children, he whose seed was to be as the stars of heaven for multitude, is

22 And the children struggled together within her: and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? \* And she went to inquire of the Lord.

x 1 Sam. 9. 9. & 10. 22.

without the prospect of an heir. Though he had been now united to Rebekah for twenty years, yet no tokens of approaching paternity cheer his heart. The child of promise continues to be denied. In this manner God had before tried his father Abraham; and if he be heir to his blessings, he must expect to inherit a portion of his trials. Yet we do not find that in this emergency he had recourse like Abraham in similar circumstances, to any crooked policy, to any doubtful expedient. He looks for relief to that source only where he was accustomed to seek and to find the cure or the solace of all his ills. 'He entreated the Lord for his wife;' or rather as the Heb. expresses it (לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ) *lenokah ishto*, before his wife: i. e. in her presence; united with her in joint supplication. 'Under similar circumstances, the husband and the wife fast and pray, and make a vow before the temple, that, should their desire be granted, they will make certain gifts, (specifying their kind,) or they will repair the walls, or add a new wing to the temple; or that the child shall be dedicated to the deity of the place, and be called by the same name. Or they go to a distant temple which has obtained notoriety by granting the favors they require. I have heard of husbands and wives remaining for a year together at such places, to gain the desire of their hearts!—Roberts. —¶ The Lord was entreated of him. 'He asked a child, and his prayer is answered by the gift of two sons, and thus Providence, often slower than our wishes, frequently compensates that delay by greatly outdoing our requests and expectations.'—Hunter.

22. The children struggled together within her. Heb. יִתְרוֹצְצוּ *yithrotzazu*, bruised themselves by struggling. The

original term, which is very strong, is employed to signify a violent concussion, or the impinging of one thing against another. She was conscious of extraordinary and painful sensations during her pregnancy, as if her children were wrestling within her. The circumstance filled her mind with perplexity, and prompted the exclamation and the inquiry immediately spoken of. The incident was no doubt supernatural, and intended to pre-intimate the future strife and variance that should subsist between the respective lines destined to descend from these two unborn children. 'She is no less troubled with the strife of the children in her womb, than before with the want of children. We know not when we are pleased: that which we desire, oftentimes discontents us more in the fruition: we are ready to complain both full and fasting: before Rebecca conceived, she was at ease: before spiritual regeneration, there is all peace in the soul: no sooner is the new man formed in us, but the flesh conflicts with the spirit. There is no grace where is no unquietness. Esau alone would not have striven: nature will ever agree with itself. Never any Rebecca conceived only an Esau; or was so happy as to conceive none but a Jacob: she must be the mother of both, that she may have both joy and exercise. This strife began early; every true Israelite begins war with his being. How many actions, which we know not of, are not without pre-  
sage and signification!—Bishop Hall. —¶ If it be so, why am I thus? Heb. אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֲנִי *im ken lammah zeh anoki*, if so, wherefore this to me? the meaning of which perhaps is, If it be so that God hath heard our prayers, why am I in this painful condition? Why have I conceived, if such strange

23 And the LORD said unto her, <sup>2</sup>Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and

<sup>2</sup> ch. 17. 16. & 24. 60.

sensations be the result? The passage, however, is exceedingly obscure, nor do we obtain much light from the ancient versions. The Gr. has, 'If it shall be so with me, why is this unto me?' Chal. 'If it was to be so, why did I conceive?' Arab. 'If I had known that the thing would be so, I would not have requested it!' Vulg. 'If it should be so with me, what need was there to conceive?'—¶ *She went to inquire of the Lord.* There are very different opinions as to the *manner* in which she made this inquiry. Some think it was simply by secret prayer; but the phrase *to inquire of the Lord*, in general usage signifies more than praying, and from its being said that she *went* to inquire, it is more probable that she resorted to some established place, or some qualified person for the purpose of consultation. We are told, 1 Sam. 9. 9, that 'Beforetime in Israel when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet, was beforetime called a seer.' As Abraham was now living, and no doubt sustained the character of a prophet, Gen. 20. 7, she may have gone to him, and inquired of the Lord through his means. The Rabbinical writers, as usual, abound with fanciful conceits on this subject, but they are not of sufficient importance to deserve recital; nor can any thing beyond conjecture be advanced upon the passage.

23. *Two nations are in thy womb.* In what particular manner the response was made to her inquiry, we are not informed, any more than how the inquiry itself was proposed; but the purport of it was, that two nations, i. e. the founders of two nations, were in her womb, and leaving her to infer that the

<sup>2</sup> *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and <sup>2</sup> *the* elder shall serve the younger.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 8. 14. <sup>2</sup> ch. 27. 29. Mal. 1. 3. Num. 9. 12.

intestine strife which caused her pain and perplexity, was a pre-intimation of the continued hostility that should subsist between their respective posterities.

—¶ *Shall be seprated from thy bowels.* Heb. יִפְרְדּוּ *yipperedu*, that is, *shall be separated from each other from the time of their birth.* The sense ordinarily put upon the words, is that of *issuing from the womb.* But this is undoubtedly incorrect, as the original is never used to signify that kind of *physical separation* implied in the removal of the child from the forming receptacle in which it had reposed before birth. It properly denotes *separation* in the sense of *parting, sundering*, and thence of *dispersing* or *scattering*, as may be seen from the following examples, which exhibit its prevailing use; 2 Sam. 1. 23, 'Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not *divided* (יִפְרְדּוּ).' Prov. 19. 4, 'Wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is *separated* (יִפְרַד) from his neighbor.' Neh. 4. 19, 'The work is great and large, and we are *separated* (נִפְרְדִּים) upon the wall.' Gen. 10 5, 'By these were the isles of the Gentiles *divided* (נִפְרְדּוּ) in their lands.' —¶ *The one people shall be stronger, &c.* The two people or nations intended were the Israelites and Edomites; and nothing is clearer from history than that these races were not only different in their dispositions, manners, customs, and religion, but that after a long course of hostilities, the seed of Isaac obtained the ascendancy, and reduced the Edomites to complete subjection. See the details of their history, as drawn out in 'Newton on the Prophecies.'—¶ *The elder shall serve the younger.* That is, *shall be subject to.* Heb. רַב יַעֲבֹד צַעִיר

24 ¶ And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold *there were* twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, <sup>b</sup> all over like an hairy garment: and they called his name Esau.

26 And after that came his brother out, and <sup>c</sup> his hand took hold on

<sup>b</sup> ch. 27. 11, 16, 23.    <sup>c</sup> Hos. 12. 3.

*rab yaabod tzair, the great shall serve the little.* That is, the greater in dignity; which was a distinction pertaining to the elder on the ground of the birthright. It is, however, constantly to be borne in mind, that what is here said of the children, refers not so much to Jacob and Esau *personally*, as to their posterity, although in the former sense it still holds true.—The Heb. רב *rab* is the root from which comes *Rabbi*, the Jewish term for *great men, and masters*.

25. *The first came out red.* Heb. אדמוני *admoni*, *rubicund* or *ruddy*, a word of the same origin with *Edom* (אדום), another appellation by which Esau was called. It elsewhere occurs only twice, 1 Sam. 16. 12, and 17. 42, in both which cases it is spoken of the florid complexion of David, and is translated *ruddy*. But here it is undoubtedly a term rather of reproach than of commendation, and applied to Esau to denote the *fierce, cruel, and sanguinary* disposition by which he and his posterity should be characterized. In proof of this, see Gen. 27. 40, 41. Obad. 1. 10. Ezek. 25. 12. Thus the cruel persecuting dragon of the Apocalypse, Rev. 12. 3, is depicted of a red color, for the same reason.—¶ *All over like an hairy garment.* Heb. כלר שער *kallu keaddereth sear*, *all of him as a mantle of hair*. Gr. 'Wholly like a rough hide.' Vulg. 'All hairy or shaggy in manner of a skin.' Chal. 'As a bristly garment.' Thus denoting his strong, rough, fierce, and uncultivated character, with perhaps a secondary allusion to his licentious temperament. From the epithet שער *sear*, *hairy* or

Esau's heel; and <sup>d</sup> his name was called Jacob: and Isaac *was* three-score years old when she bare them.

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was <sup>e</sup> a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* <sup>f</sup> a plain man <sup>g</sup> dwelling in tents.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 27. 36.    <sup>e</sup> ch. 27. 3, 5.    <sup>f</sup> Job 1. 1, 8. & 2.    <sup>g</sup> Ps. 37. 37.    <sup>h</sup> Hebr. 11. 9.

*shaggy*, is derived the name of the principal range of mountains, *Mt. Seir*, lying in his territory Mal. 1. 3.—¶ *They called his name Esau.* Heb. עשׂו *esav*, which the Jewish commentators interpret by *made, made up, perfected*, i. e. not having a soft, smooth skin like other infants, but covered with hair like a full-grown man; indicating the possession of a constitutional vigor entirely out of the common course of nature. Others, however, with great probability think *Esau* to be dialectical variation from the Arabic root عرأ *atha*, *to be covered with hair*, whence אתרי *athai*, *hairy*. The true etymology cannot perhaps be definitively settled.

26. *His name was called Jacob.* Heb. יעקב *yaakob*, *he shall hold by the foot*, from עקב *akab*, *to supplant, to trip up the heels, to throw down by tripping up the heels*, and thence metaphorically *to deceive, to defraud*. The name was given to Jacob because it was found that he had at birth laid hold on his brother's heel, an act emblematical of his subsequently *supplanting* and *defrauding* him in the matter of the birthright.

27. *A cunning hunter.* Heb. איש ידע ציד *ish yodea tzayid*, *a man knowing hunting*; i. e. skilled or expert in hunting.—¶ *A man of the field.* Addicted to ranging the field.—¶ *A plain man dwelling in tents.* Heb. איש תם *ish tam*, literally *a perfect or upright man*; but in what sense precisely the epithet is to be understood in this connection, is not obvious. The ancient versions, most of them, especially the Chal., the



Syr., and the Arab., adhere to the primitive sense of the term as given above, but the Gr. has rendered it by *απλαστος*, *guileless*, and the Vulg. by *simplex*, from which comes our translation *plain*. But this is a very ambiguous term. 'Plain,' in one of its senses, is opposed to splendid, sumptuous, extravagant; but this can hardly be its import here, as in this particular there can be little doubt that the two brothers were very much upon a level. The state of society in those primitive ages would not allow of any marked difference in their modes of living in this respect. Again, that it is a term descriptive of *moral character*, implying that high degree of *sincerity, uprightness, and integrity* which is predicated in the word *perfect* of Noah, Job, and others, is not very easily conceivable, while so much evidence to the contrary is afforded in regard to Jacob by the sequel of the narrative. Perhaps the most probable supposition is that it refers not to *moral* qualities, but to *native disposition, temperament, or predilection* as to a particular mode of life, and that Jacob is here called a 'plain man,' not as plainness is opposed to *subtlety* in general, in which he seems to have been as much an adept as his brother, but as opposed to Esau's skill, cunning, or dexterity in *hunting*, a pursuit to which Jacob was habitually or constitutionally averse, preferring the more calm and quiet occupations of the *pastoral* life. —¶ *Dwelling in tents*. It would, perhaps, be too much to infer from this that Esau did not dwell at all in tents; but as Jacob followed the occupation of a shepherd, and as the pastoral life was necessarily in those regions nomadic or migratory, this would naturally lead to his living more emphatically in tents, as a needful appendage to his pursuits as a shepherd. 'The use of tents probably arose at first out of the exigencies of pastoral life, which rendered it necessary that men removing from one place to another in search of pasture

should have a portable habitation. Accordingly we find that the first mention of tents is connected with the keeping of cattle (ch. 4. 20), and to this day tents remain the exclusive residence of only pastoral people. Portability is not the only recommendation of tents to the nomade tribes of the East; the shelter which they offer in the warm but delicious climates of Western Asia is positive enjoyment. Shelter from the sun is all that is needful; and this a tent sufficiently affords, without excluding the balmy and delicate external air, the comparative exclusion of which renders the finest house detestable to one accustomed to a residence in tents. The advantage of tents in this respect is so well understood even by the inhabitants of towns, that in many places, those whose circumstances admit it, endeavor so far as possible, to occupy tents during the summer months. This was the constant practice of the late king of Persia, who every year left his capital with all the nobles, and more than half the inhabitants, to encamp in the plain of Sultanieh. Many of the princes, his sons, did the same in their several provinces; and the practice is an old one in Persia. It is true that tents would seem to be rather cheerless abodes in the winter; but it is to be recollected that the nomades have generally the power of changing the climate with the season. In winter the Bedouins plunge into the heart of the Desert, and others descend, in the same season, from the mountainous and high lands, where they had enjoyed comparative coolness in summer, to the genial winter climate of the low valleys and plains, which in the summer had been too warm. It is impossible to ascertain with precision the construction and appearance of the patriarchal tents; but we shall not probably be far from the truth, if we consider the present Arab tent as affording the nearest existing approximation to the ancient model. The common Arab

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did <sup>h</sup>eat of *his* venison: <sup>i</sup> but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 27. 19, 25, 31. <sup>i</sup> ch. 27. 6.

tent is generally of an oblong figure, varying in size according to the wants or rank of the owner, and its general shape not unaptly compared by Sallust, and after him Dr. Shaw, to the hull of a ship turned upside down. A length of from 25 to 30 feet, by a depth or breadth not exceeding 10 feet, form the dimensions of a rather large family tent; but there are many larger. The extreme height—that is, the height of the poles, which are made higher than the others in order to give a slope to throw off the rain from the roof—varies from 7 to 10 feet: but the height of the side parts seldom exceeds 5 or 6 feet. The most usual sized tent has 9 poles, three in the middle, and three on each side. The covering of the tent among the Arabs is usually black goats'-hair, so completely woven, as to be impervious to the heaviest rain; but the side coverings are often of coarse wool. These tent-coverings are spun and woven at home by the women, unless the tribe has not goats enough to supply its own demand for goats'-hair, when the stuff is bought from those better furnished. The front of the tent is usually kept open, except in winter, and the back and side hangings or coverings are so managed, that the air can be admitted in any direction, or excluded at pleasure. The tents are kept stretched in the usual way by cords, fastened at one end to the poles, and at the other to pins driven into the ground at the distance of three or four paces from the tent. The interior is divided into two apartments, by a curtain hung up against the middle poles of the tent. This partition is usually of white woolen stuff, sometimes interwoven with patterns of flowers. One of these is for the men, and the other for the women. In the former, the ground is usu-

29 ¶ And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint.

ally covered with carpets or mats, and the wheat-sacks and camel-bags are heaped up in it, around the middle post, like a pyramid, at the base of which, or towards the back of the tent, are arranged the camels' pack-saddles, against which the men recline as they sit on the ground. The women's apartment is less neat, being encumbered with all the lumber of the tent, the water and butter skins, the culinary utensils, &c. Some tents of great people are square, perhaps 30 feet square, with a proportionate increase in the number of poles, while others are so small as to require but one pole to support the centre. The principal differences are in the slope of the roof, and in the part for entrance. When the tent is oblong, the front is sometimes one of the broad, and at other times one of the narrow, sides of the tent. We suspect this difference depends on the season of the year or the character of the locality, but we cannot speak with certainty on this point. Some further information concerning tents has been given in previous notes, and other tents and huts will hereafter be noticed. It will be observed, that the tent covering among the Arabs is usually black; but it seems that they are sometimes brown, and occasionally striped white and black. Black tents seem to have prevailed among the Arabs from the earliest times.—*Pict. Bible*.

28. *Isaac loved Esau, because, &c.* This partiality of Isaac towards Esau, especially considering the grounds of it, was not only a weakness wholly unworthy of him, but the prolific source of most of the troubles which afterwards arose to disquiet the family of the patriarch. The mischief was increased by Rebekah's having her favorite also; although the reasons of her preference

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

are not stated. Perhaps her affections centered more upon Jacob, because he was the younger, more delicate, more placid, and of a more domestic turn. Or it may be that her fondness was directed by the prophecies which had gone before upon him, marking him out as the one more favored of heaven. But, whatever may be said of the respective grounds of these parental preferences, it is clear from the sequel that nothing could be more unhappy than the consequences to which they led. The distresses which embittered the remainder of Isaac's life are to be traced directly to this source; teaching us by an impressive example, the lesson which all parents may expect to learn from the exhibition of a similar weakness. A distinction among children, while it sows the seeds of discord between the heads of the household themselves, produces effects upon its objects equally disastrous. It kindles the flames of jealousy and resentment between brothers and sisters, and renders the heart, which should be the seat of every gentle and kindly emotion, the habitation of anger, malice, and revenge; and if such baleful passions do not break out into deeds of violence and blood, it will be simply because a kind providence in some way interposes, and spares those that have sown the wind from reaping the whirlwind. Let these considerations have their due weight with those who stand in this delicate and responsible relation. Let the principles of equity combine with the dictates of nature to forbid an unequal distribution of parental favors or affections. It may not perhaps be always possible to suppress the *feeling* of preference, but the *expression* of it, at least, is in our power; and as we value the peace and happiness of the domestic circle, as well as the *real good* of the object of our partiality, we shall stu-

diously avoid betraying it either by word or deed.—¶ *Because he did eat of his venison.* Heb. *אֵלַי צִיד בִּפְיוֹ* *al tziyd bephiv*, because his venison was in his mouth. Gr. 'His wild game was his food.' The original denotes not merely the flesh of the deer as among us, but *any kind of game taken in hunting*; and the import of the expression 'was in his mouth' is, that it was agreeable to his taste. This phraseology, it seems, is not unknown elsewhere in the East. 'Has a man been supported by another, and is it asked, 'Why does Kandan love Muttoo?' the reply is, 'Because Muttoo's rice is in his mouth.' 'Why have you such a regard for that man?'—'Is not his rice in my mouth?'—*Roberts*. But how humiliating the reason assigned for Isaac's preference of his elder son! By what grovelling and unworthy motives are wise and good men sometimes actuated! How mortifying a view of human nature to see prudence, justice, and piety controlled by one of the lowest and grossest of our appetites.

29. *Jacob sod pottage.* 'Sod' is the past tense of 'seethe,' to boil. The word rendered *pottage* signifies a dish made by boiling. See farther of this dish in the subsequent note.

30. *Feed me.* Heb. *הִלֵּצִיתִנִּי* *halitini*, let me have a draught; a word occurring nowhere else in the Bible, and evidently implying that the dish was served up in a liquid form. 'The people of the East are exceedingly fond of *pottage*, which they call *Kool*. It is something like gruel, and is made of various kinds of grain, which are first beaten in a mortar. The red pottage is made of *Kurakan*, and other grains, but is not superior to the other. For such a contemptible mess, then, did Esau sell his birthright. When a man has sold his fields or gardens for an insignificant sum, the people say 'The fellow has sold his

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I

am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

land for *pottage*.' Does a father give his daughter in marriage to a low caste man, it is observed, 'He has given her for *pottage*.' Does a person by base means seek for some paltry enjoyment, it is said, 'For one leaf (i. e., leaf-ful) of *pottage*, he will do nine days' work.' Has a learned man stooped to any thing which was not expected from him, it is said, 'The learned one has fallen into the *pottage pot*.' Has he given instruction or advice to others—'The lizard which gave warning to the people, has fallen into the *pottage pot*.' Of a man in great poverty, it is remarked, 'Alas! he cannot get *pottage*.' A beggar asks, 'Sir, will you give me a little *pottage*?' Does a man seek to acquire large things by small means—'He is trying to procure rubies by *pottage*.' When a person greatly flatters another, it is common to say, 'He praises him only for his *pottage*.' Does a king greatly oppress his subjects, it is said, 'He only governs for his *pottage*.' Has an individual lost much money by trade—'The speculation has broken his *pottage pot*.' Does a rich man threaten to ruin a poor man, the latter will ask, 'Will the lightning strike my *pottage pot*?' Roberts.—¶ *With that same red pottage.* Heb. בִּרְאֵי הָאֵדָם *min haadom*, *haadom*, of or from the red, that red. The repetition of the epithet and the omission of the substantive, indicated the extreme haste and eagerness of the asker. His eye was caught by the color and luscious appearance of the dish, and being faint with hunger and fatigue, he gave way to the solicitations of appetite, regardless of consequences. 'The אֵדָם *edom*, or red *pottage*, was prepared, we learn from this chapter, by seething lentils עֲדָשִׁים *edashim* in water; and subsequently, as we may guess, from a practice which prevails in many countries, adding a lit-

tle *manteca*, or suet, to give them a flavor. The writer of these observations has often partaken of this self-same 'red *pottage*,' served up in the manner just described, and found it better food than a stranger would be apt to imagine. The mess had the redness which gained for it the name of *edom*; and which, through the singular circumstance of a son selling his birthright to satisfy the cravings of a pressing appetite, it imparted to the posterity of Esau in the people of Edom. The lentil (or *Lens esculenta* of some writers, and the *Ervum lens* of Linnæus) belongs to the leguminous or podded family. The stem is branched, and the leaves consist of about eight pairs of smaller leaflets. The flowers are small, and with the upper division of the flower prettily veined. The pods contain about two seeds, which vary from a tawny red to a black. It delights in a dry, warm, sandy soil. Three varieties are cultivated in France—'small brown,' 'yellowish,' and the 'lentil of Provence.' In the former country they are dressed and eaten during Lent as a haricot; in Syria they are used as food after they have undergone the simple process of being parched in a pan over the fire.'—*Pict. Bible*.—¶ *Therefore was his name called Edom.* That is, red. That another reason existed for his being so called, viz. the peculiar cast of his complexion or skin at birth, appears from v. 25; but the epithet acquired a new significancy from the circumstance here recorded, and was in fact applied to him as a memorial of his inordinate craving in the matter of the red *pottage*, under the promptings of which he was induced to sell his birthright.

21. *Sell me this day thy birthright.* That is, the right of primogeniture, the prerogatives of which were very important, although the attempts of the learn-

ed to define them with absolute precision have not been successful. The following are usually enumerated as the principal privileges which constituted the distinction of the first-born : (1) They were peculiarly given and consecrated to God, Ex. 22. 29 ; (2) they stood next in honor to their parents, Gen. 49. 3 ; (3) had a double portion in the paternal inheritance, Deut. 21. 17 ; (4) succeeded in the government of the family or kingdom, 2 Chron. 21. 3 ; and, (5) were honored with the office of priesthood, and the administration of the public worship of God. The phrase ' first-born,' therefore, was used to denote one who was peculiarly near and dear to his father, Ex. 4. 22, and higher than his brethren, Ps. 89. 28 ; and typically pointed to Christ, and to all true Christians, who are joint heirs with him, to an eternal inheritance, and constitute the *first-born* whose names are written in heaven. Heb. 12. 23. ' It should be understood, that previously to the establishment of a priesthood under the Law of Moses, the first-born had not only a preference in the secular inheritance, but succeeded exclusively to the priestly functions which had belonged to his father, in leading the religious observances of the family, and performing the simple religious rites of these patriarchal times. The secular part of the birthright entitled the first-born to a ' double portion' of the inheritance ; but writers are divided in opinion as to the proportion of this double share. Some think that he had one-half, and that the rest was equally divided among the other sons ; but a careful consideration of Gen. 47. 5—22, in which we see that Jacob transfers the privilege of the first-born to Joseph, and that this privilege consisted in his having one share more than any of his brethren, inclines us to the opinion of the Rabbins, that the first-born had merely twice as much as any other of his brethren. It is certainly possible, but not very likely, that

in the emergency, Esau bartered all his birthright for a mess of pottage ; but it seems more probable that Esau did not properly appreciate the value of the sacerdotal part of his birthright, and therefore readily transferred it to Jacob for a trifling present advantage. This view of the matter seems to be confirmed by St. Paul, who calls Esau a ' profane person' for his conduct on this occasion ; and it is rather for despising his spiritual than his temporal privileges, that he seems to be liable to such an imputation.'—*Pict. Bible*.

32. *Behold, I am at the point to die.* אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת *anoki holek lamuth, I am going (or walking) to die ;* i. e. I am daily exposed to die ; liable to be cut off in consequence of my precarious mode of life, and at best have but a short time to live. This was doubtless his meaning, and not that he should now die of hunger unless he ate of the pottage ; for it is not conceivable but that in the house of Isaac there either was, or might easily be procured, something to satisfy the cravings of nature. But men seldom abstain from any thing they are anxious to do, for want of some excuse on the ground of expediency or necessity to justify it. So it was with Esau. He was eager for the food, and, under the pressure of hunger, was willing to part with his birthright to obtain it, though he was still too well aware of the value of his inheritance to alienate it without presenting to himself the semblance of a reason for so unequal a barter. He therefore makes the exposedness of his condition a pretence for the step. With this flimsy apology, he endeavors to hide from himself the infatuation of his conduct. The spirit of his language was, ' I cannot live upon promises ; give me something to eat and drink, for to-morrow I die.' Such is the spirit of unbelief in every age ; and thus it is that poor deluded souls continue to despise things distant and heavenly, preferring to them the mo-

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and <sup>k</sup> he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread

<sup>k</sup> Hebr. 12. 16.

mentary gratifications of flesh and sense.

34. *Gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles.* Rather according to the Heb. 'Gave Esau food, even pottage of lentiles.' 'Lentiles' were a kind of pulse, like vetches or pease. Dr. Shaw observes of the Egyptians, 'that beans, lentiles, kidney beans, and garvancos, are the chiefest of their pulse kind. Beans, when boiled, and stewed with oil and garlic, are the principal food of persons of all distinctions. *Lentiles* are dressed in the same manner as beans, dissolving easily into a mass, and making a pottage of a chocolate color.'—*Travels*, p. 140.—¶ *Thus Esau despised his birthright.* That is, *practically* despised it; not that he did in his private judgment entertain a contemptuous idea of its value, but by bartering it away for such a paltry consideration, he acted as if he despised it; and the Scriptures regard conduct as the true test of principle and motive. Thus was the momentous bargain concluded which was to transfer for ever to the younger son the right of primogeniture—a bargain of which Bp. Hall significantly remarks, 'there was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dear bought as this broth of Jacob.' It would have been a strong proof of his indifference to religious privileges, had he sold them for all the riches that Jacob could have given him in return; but what can be thought of the infatuation of throwing them away for so very a trifle? How justly does the apostle, writing as moved by the Holy Ghost, affix the epithet 'profane' to the character of the man who, 'for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' A *profane* person is one

and pottage of lentiles; and <sup>l</sup> he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

<sup>l</sup> Eccles. 8. 15. Isai. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.

who treats sacred things with irreligious contempt. Esau is so termed because he practically despised and undervalued those inestimable spiritual privileges and blessings secured in the birthright. Had he disregarded only temporal benefits, he had been guilty indeed of egregious folly, but it would not have amounted to *profaneness*. But now by one rash act, prompted by the urgency of a fleshly appetite, he voluntarily renounced, and forfeited for himself and his posterity, all the precious prerogatives which flowed down in the line of the covenant, and which ought to have been dearer to him than life itself. It may, indeed, be said that it was unjust and unkind in Jacob to take advantage of his brother's necessity and thoughtlessness, and we may not perhaps be able wholly to acquit him of the charge; but still this affords no real palliation of the conduct of Esau. The Scriptures nowhere represent Jacob as a perfect character; and it is, moreover, altogether supposable that he had long been aware of his brother's indifference in this matter, and that he had daily proofs of the light estimation in which he held these spiritual favors, and therefore would be less scrupulous in availing himself of the opportunity to get possession of them. But all this affords no apology for Esau, whose criminality was enhanced by his evincing no remorse on account of what he had done. He expressed no regret for his folly, nor made any overtures to his brother to induce him to cancel the bargain. On the contrary, it is said that 'he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way,' as if he were perfectly satisfied with the equivalent, such as it was, which he had ob-

## CHAPTER XXVI.

AND there was a famine in the land, besides <sup>a</sup> the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto <sup>b</sup> Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 12. 10.    <sup>b</sup> ch. 20. 2.

tained. But while we justly condemn the reckless and ruinous conduct of Esau in this transaction, let us not forget how many there are that virtually justify his deed by following his example. Though living embosomed in an economy of light and love, yet what numbers are there who manifest the same indifference about spiritual blessings, and the same insatiate thirst after sensual indulgence, as did Esau? The language of their conduct is, 'Give me the gratification of my desires; I must and will have it, whatever it cost me. If I cannot have it but at the peril of my soul, so be it. Let my hope in Christ be destroyed; let my prospects of heaven be for ever darkened; only give me the indulgence which my lusts demand.' What do we see in all this but the very temper and behavior of the profane Esau? What is this but a sale of the birthright for a mess of pottage? Such conduct, in such circumstances, is far more inexcusable than even that of Esau. It may be pleaded in excuse for him that he knew not comparatively what a Saviour or what an inheritance he despised. But we have had the Saviour fully revealed to us, and know what a glorious place the heavenly Canaan is. Yet with thousands Christ and heaven are as little thought of as though they were utterly unworthy of attention. And what aggravates this perverseness is, that it is followed by the same reckless unconcern as marked the conduct of Esau. Its subjects do not bethink themselves of what they have done. They go on in their worldly career regardless of consequences. They do not acknowledge and bewail their

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt: dwell in <sup>c</sup> the land which I shall tell thee of.

3 <sup>d</sup> Sojourn in this land, and <sup>e</sup> I

<sup>c</sup> ch. 12. 1.    <sup>d</sup> ch. 20. 1.    Ps. 39. 12.    Hebr. 11. 9.    <sup>e</sup> ch. 28. 15.

sin and folly. They do not repent and pray for pardon. They do not resort to the means which God in mercy has provided for the forgiveness of offenders. Alas! what a fearfully close resemblance in all this to the mad career of their prototype! We can only earnestly beseech all such to reflect deeply on their folly and danger, and to contemplate that moment when they shall be 'at the point to die.' Let them think what judgment they will then form of earthly and eternal things. Will they then say contemptuously, 'What profit will this birthright be to me?' Will it then appear a trifling matter to have an interest in the Saviour, and a title to heaven?

## CHAPTER XXVI.

1. *And there was a famine, &c.* The times of the patriarchs appear to have been remarkable for the frequent occurrence of famines. It may not be easy to account for the fact, but it is obvious that every such season must have been a trial to their faith, as it would tempt them to think lightly of the land of promise. Unbelief would say that it was a land which 'ate up the inhabitants thereof,' and that it was not worth waiting for. Thus Abraham had been tried, Gen. 12. 10, and Isaac is now made to pass through the same ordeal. —¶ *Isaac went unto Abimelech.* 'The name of the king and of the captain of the host, Phicol (v. 26), are the same as in Abraham's time; but the persons are no doubt different, as more than ninety years have intervened between the visit of Abraham and this of Isaac. It is not unlikely that Abimelech' and 'Phicol'

will be with thee, and <sup>f</sup> will bless thee : for unto thee, and unto thy seed <sup>g</sup> I will give all these countries,

<sup>f</sup> ch. 12. 1.    <sup>g</sup> ch. 13. 15. & 15. 18.

were standing official names for the kings and generals of this little kingdom. A king of this country is called Abimelech in David's time. In the history, indeed, 1 Sam. 21. 10, he is called Achish, but in Ps. 34, he is called Abimelech.—There is a surprising similarity between the history of Abraham's sojourn at Gerar, and that of his son.

2. *Go not down into Egypt.* Whither it was undoubtedly his original purpose to have gone. But although Abraham in like circumstances had been permitted to go to the same country, and sojourn there during the extremity of the famine, yet this permission was denied to Isaac; perhaps because God foresaw that, from the native gentleness of his character, he would be less able than his father to encounter the perils and temptations with which he would meet among a people, from whose vices the more hardy virtue of Abraham himself had scarcely escaped unharmed. It would, indeed, have been easy for God to have armed him with a sufficient degree of inward fortitude to withstand the assaults to which his religious principles would be exposed, but this would have been a departure from the ordinary course of his moral government, and he consults his well-being at once more wisely and more kindly by sparing him the necessity of the conflict. Where the heart and the general course of conduct is right, we may take it for granted that God will order his providence, with a special reference to our infirmities, so as graciously to anticipate and avert the evils into which we should otherwise have plunged ourselves.—¶ *Dwell in the land, &c.* Heb. שֶׁכֶן *shekon, tabernacle, or dwell tent-wise.* Thus Heb. 11. 9, 'By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise,

and I will perform <sup>h</sup> the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father ;

<sup>h</sup> ch. 22. 16. Ps. 105. 9.

as in a strange country, *dwelling in tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob ;' i. e. *in the same way* with Isaac and Jacob. He is commanded to abide in the land of his present sojourning, and yet in such a way that he should be perpetually reminded that he was *merely* a sojourner, and that the time for the full possession of the promised land had not yet arrived. 'He feeds his mind with the hope of the promised inheritance, but at the same time magnifies his word by giving him inward peace only in the midst of outward agitations. And surely we never lean upon a better prop than when, trusting simply to the divine declaration, and disregarding the present aspect of things, we apprehend by faith a blessing which does not yet appear.'—*Calvin.*

3. *I will be with thee, &c.* Chal. 'My Word shall be an help unto thee.' To satisfy Isaac that he should never want a guide or a provider, the Lord renews to him the promises that had been made to his father Abraham. 'Had he met with nothing to drive him from his retreat by the well of Lahai-roi, he might have enjoyed more quiet, but he might not have been indulged with such great and precious promises. Times of affliction, though disagreeable to the flesh, have often proved our best times.'—*Fuller.* It is in this way that God is wont to arouse his sluggish servants to action, by assuring them that their labor shall be in vain. He does, indeed, claim at our hands, as a father from a son, a ready and unrecompensed service, but he is pleased by the exhibition of rich rewards to stimulate and quicken the diligence which is so prone to grow slack. This solemn renewal of the covenant is distinguished by two remarkable features :  
(1) *The good things promised ;* 'I will be



4 And <sup>1</sup> I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries: <sup>2</sup> and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed:

<sup>1</sup> ch. 15. 5. & 22. 17.

<sup>2</sup> ch. 12. 3. & 22. 18.

with thee, and bless thee,' &c. The sum and substance of the blessings is, the grant of the land of Canaan, a numerous progeny, and, chief of all, the Messiah in whom the nations should be blessed. On these precious promises Isaac was to live. God provided him bread in the day of famine, but he lived not on bread only, but on every word which proceeded out of the mouth of God. (2) *Their being given for Abraham's sake*; 'Because Abraham obeyed my voice,' &c. While all the essential good of the promise is assured to Isaac, and thus made a source of encouragement and comfort to him, any incipient rising of self-complacency is kept down by the intimation, that it is rather to Abraham's merit than to his own, that he is to look as the procuring cause of such signal favor.—¶ *All these countries.* Heb. אֶרֶצוֹת eratzoth, lands; viz. those which are so particularly rehearsed Gen. 15. 18—21, though now possessed by numerous and powerful nations. Comp. Ps. 105. 42—44.—¶ *Will perform.* Heb. הַקִּימוֹתִי hakimothi, will cause to stand up, will establish; a phraseology of very common occurrence in speaking of the fulfilment of the divine promises. Gr. ὀψω, I will establish, confirm.

5. *Kept my charge, my commandments, &c.* Heb. יִשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי yishmor mishmarti, kept my keeping; i. e. my ordinances; a general term for whatever God commands or ordains for man's observance. Comp. Lev. 8. 35.—22. 9. Deut. 11. 1. The variety of terms here employed, many of which did not come into common use till some ages afterwards, seems intended to convey the idea

5 <sup>1</sup> Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

6 ¶ And Isaac dwelt in Gerar:

7 And the men of the place ask-

<sup>1</sup> ch. 22. 16, 18.

of the *universality* of Abraham's obedience. He gave the most diligent and exact heed to every precept, admonition, and institution which God was pleased to impart. Very nice distinctions are attempted to be made by the Jewish writers in fixing the precise import of these several terms; but it will be sufficient to remark in general, that by 'commandments' is meant both moral precepts, as those of the decalogue, to which it is often applied, and also occasional directions or appointments, such as the command to leave the land of the Chaldees, to offer up Isaac, to send away Ishmael, &c. By 'statutes' is meant the ceremonial institutes, or the rules and ordinances pertaining to the ritual services, such as circumcision, sacrifices, distinction of clean and unclean, &c.; all which are founded solely upon the will of God, and not upon the intrinsic nature or propriety of things. 'Laws,' again, are *authoritative instructions* relative to the doctrines and duties of religion in general; moral teachings which have a binding power upon the conscience. The original word תּוֹרָה torah is derived from a root יָרָה yarah, signifying to teach, to train by institution, and this etymology is plainly hinted at in the sacred text, Ex. 24. 12, 'I will give thee tables of stone, and (even) a law (תּוֹרָה torah,) and commandments, that thou mayest teach them (לְהוֹרֹתָם lehorotham).' A fuller explication of these terms will be given as we proceed in our expository notes upon the subsequent books.

7. *The men of the place* asked him of his wife. As the word answering to 'him' is wanting in the original, the idea probably is, that the men of the place

ed him of his wife; and <sup>m</sup> he said, She is my sister: for <sup>n</sup> he feared to say, *She is my wife*; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she <sup>o</sup> was fair to look upon.

8 And it came to pass when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 12. 13. & 20. 2. 13.    <sup>n</sup> Prov. 29. 25.  
<sup>o</sup> ch. 24. 16.

in the first instance asked of each other respecting her, made her a frequent topic of conversation. But the result was that these inquiries came at length to Isaac himself, and he was prompted to answer them in the manner described. —¶ *He said, she is my sister, &c.* Isaac here falls into the same infirmity which had dishonored his father in Egypt. Influenced by a fear unworthy of a friend of God, he gives an equivocating answer, the criminality of which was aggravated by the extraordinary manifestations of the divine goodness so recently vouchsafed to him. He is indeed entitled to the same apology that was made for Abraham on a similar occasion, viz. that according to common usage in respect to the words 'brother' and 'sister', he was not guilty of a positive falsehood; for Rebekah was his cousin, and the terms above-mentioned are used indiscriminately of all kindred. Still, it may be properly said to have been taking advantage of a quibble, and as such, was a conduct wholly unbecoming one who had so much reason to repose an unlimited confidence in the divine protection. He was in all probability prompted to this expedient by the example of his father in similar circumstances, forgetting that the infirmities of pious men are not to be imitated, but avoided. 'The falls of them that

9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us! one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and <sup>p</sup> thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us.

11 And Abimelech charged all

<sup>p</sup> ch. 20. 9.

have gone before us, are so many rocks on which others have split; and the recording of them is like placing buoys over them, for the security of future mariners.'—*Fuller*. But the incident teaches another and quite as important a lesson, viz. that in swerving at all from the strict path of duty, we may be furnishing a precedent to others of whom we little dream. No man knows, in doing wrong, what use will be made of his example.

8. *Isaac was sporting with Rebekah.* That is, taking freedoms, using familiarities with her, such as exceeded those that were common between brothers and sisters. The original is מִצְחָק metzahak, a derivative from צָחַק tzhak, the root from which Isaac's name comes, on the import of which see Note on Gen, 21. 9.

9. *Of a surety she is thy wife.* But why was this a necessary inference? Might not Isaac justly have subjected himself to evil imputations? Might he not have been guilty of great crimes under the covert of his alleged relationship to Rebekah? The answer to this is highly creditable to the patriarch. It is clear that his general deportment at Gerar had been so uniformly upright and exemplary, that Abimelech knew not how to entertain an ill opinion of his conduct; and though his words were inconsistent with his conduct in the present

his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

12 Then Isaac sowed in that

q Ps. 105. 15.

instance, yet, judging from his whole deportment, he comes to the conclusion rather that his words had been somehow false, than that his actions had been wrong. Such is usually the paramount influence of a good life.

10. *Might lightly have lien with.* Heb. כִּמְעַט שָׁכַב *kimat shakav, within a little had lien with.* Chal. 'It lacked but a little of one of the people's lying with her.' The word 'lightly' in our translation seems to be equivalent to 'easily.'

—¶ *Shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.* Heb. אָשָׁם *asham, gross or shameful crime, a term applied both to sin and the punishment of sin.* It is here rendered by the Gr. *αἰνοματία, ignorance*, a kindred term to which is applied also by the apostle, from the Septuagint usage, to the sins or 'errors' (*αἰνοματίας ignorances, or ignorant trespasses*) of the people, Heb. 9. 7, for which atonement was made every year. In Paul's use of it, it doubtless denotes that class of sins which were committed rather through *inadvertence* than presumption and wilfulness; and such a distinction is very appropriate here. The sin which the king of Gerar intimates *might* have been brought upon his people, would have been strictly one of *inadvertence* or *ignorance* on his part—an *αἰνοματία*. His words show, however, that it was a deeply fixed persuasion in the minds of heathen nations, that the violation of the marriage covenant was a sin of deep die, and one which merited, and was likely to draw after it, the divine indignation.

11. *He that toucheth, &c.* That is, injureth, or wrongeth, either by word or deed, in person, honor, or possessions. Thus Josh. 9. 19, 'We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel;

land, and received in the same year an hundred-fold: and the Lord blessed him:

r Matt. 13. 8. Mark 4. 8. \* ver. 3 ch. 24. 1, 35. Job 42. 12.

now therefore we may not touch them,' i. e. hurt them. Job 1. 11, 'But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath,' i. e. injure, blast, or destroy. Ps. 105. 15, 'Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,' i. e. injure not, as implied in the latter or exegetical clause. The conduct of Abimelech on this occasion was as worthy of a good king, as that of Isaac had been unworthy of a servant of God.

12. *Isaac sowed in that land.* 'A gentleman who had spent many years in Persia gave us the following information while conversing about the pastoral tribes (Eelauts) which form a large part of its population;—There are some that live in their tents all the year; and others that build huts for the winter, which they abandon in the summer, and often return to them in the winter. They then begin to grow corn in the vicinity, and leave a few old persons to look after it. As the cultivation increases, a greater number of persons stay at the huts in the summer also, until at last nearly all the tribe remains to attend to the cultivation, only sending out a few with the flocks. Thus the wandering tribes gradually change from a pastoral to an agricultural people. May not this illustrate the situation of our pastoral patriarch when he began to cultivate? And may not the prospect which it involved of Isaac's permanent settlement in Gerar with his powerful clan, account for the visible uneasiness of the king and people of that district, and for the measures which they took to prevent such settlement? We thus also see the process by which a wandering and pastoral people gradually become settled cultivators.' *Pict. Bib.*—¶ *Received in the same year, &c.* Heb

13 And the man <sup>t</sup> waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great :

14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants : and the Philistines <sup>u</sup> envied him.

<sup>t</sup> ch. 24. 35. Ps. 112. 3. Prov. 10. 22.

<sup>u</sup> ch. 37. 11. Eccles. 4. 4.

*found*, implying that it was more than he looked for ; an increase far exceeding his most sanguine expectations. Chal. 'He found in that year a hundred-fold more than he thought of.' This was the evident effect of the special blessing of God.

13. *Went forward.* Heb. יָלַךְ הָלֹךְ *yelek halok*, *went or walked going* ; i. e. kept continually increasing. The Heb. term for 'walk' or 'go' is frequently used in the sense of *continued increase or growing intensity*. Thus, 2 Sam. 3. 1, 'Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David ; but David *waxed stronger and stronger* ;' Heb. Went on or walked, and became strong. Jon. 1. 11, 'For the sea *wrought*, and was tempestuous ;' Heb. The sea *walked* and was tempestuous. See Note on Gen. 3. 8.

14. *Great store of servants.* Heb. עַבְדֵּיהָ רַבָּה *avuddah rabbah*, *much service* ; abstract col. sing. for concrete. Thus Ezek. 1. 1, 'I was among the *captives* ;' Heb. I was among the *captivity*. It is an idiom of frequent occurrence. Ainsworth and the marg. give 'husbandry', as does the Gr. γεωργία, implying not only the collective body of servants belonging to a thrifty agricultural establishment, but also the various work in tillage, &c. which they performed. The same thing is said of Job 1. 3. — '¶ And the Philistines envied him.' The original קָנָה *kana*, which is usually rendered as here by the Gr. ζήλω, *to be zealous*, has, when used in a bad sense, the import of a *jealous, envious, indignant zeal*. 'Here again we see how

15 For all the wells <sup>w</sup> which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us : for thou <sup>x</sup> art much mightier than we.

<sup>w</sup> ch. 21. 30. <sup>x</sup> Exod. 1. 9.

vanity attaches to every earthly good ; prosperity begets *envy*, and from envy proceeds *injury*.'—*Fuller*.

15. *All the wells, &c.* A more effectual mode of expressing envy or enmity could not well have been devised, as it was in effect to destroy the flocks and herds which could not subsist without water. In those countries a good well of water was a possession of immense value ; and hence in predatory wars it was always an object for either party to fill the wells with earth or sand, in order to distress the enemy. 'The same mode of taking vengeance on enemies has been practised in more recent times. The Turkish emperors give annually to every Arab tribe near the road by which the Mahomedan pilgrims travel to Mecca, a certain sum of money, and a certain number of vestments, to keep them from destroying the wells which lie on that route, and to escort the pilgrims across their country. D'Herbelot records an incident exactly in point, which seems to be quite common among the Arabs. Gianabi, a famous rebel in the tenth century, gathered a number of people together, seized on Bassorah and Caufa ; and afterwards insulted the reigning caliph, by presenting himself boldly before Bagdad, his capital ; after which he retired by little and little, filling up all the pits with sand, which had been dug on the road to Mecca for the benefit of the pilgrims.'—*Paxton*. Had the Philistines merely forced their way to these wells, and drank of them, it might have been excused ; but to stop them, was an act of downright

17 ¶ And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father: for the Philistines had stop-

ped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

γ ch. 21. 31

barbarity, and a gross violation of the treaty of peace which had been made between a former Abimelech and Abraham. Gen. 21. 25—31. But envy considers that which is lost to another as gained to itself, and not only delights in working gratuitous mischief, but will even punish itself in a measure to have the malicious satisfaction of doing a still greater injury to an enemy.

16. *Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.* It is not, perhaps, to be inferred that this request expresses the personal feelings of Abimelech towards Isaac; but perceiving the temper of his people, he entreated him quietly to depart. The reason he gave for it, that 'he was much mightier than they,' was framed perhaps in part to apologise for his people's jealousy, and in part to soften his spirit by a complimentary style of address. Had Isaac been disposed to act upon Abimelech's admission, he might, instead of removing at his request, have resolved to stand his ground, alleging the covenant made with his father, and his own improvements of his lands; but being a man of peace, and willing to act upon the maxim of the wise man, that 'yielding pacifieth great offences,' he waves all dispute, and meekly retires to 'the valley of Gerar,' either beyond the borders of Abimelech's territory, or at least farther off from his metropolis.

17. *Pitched his tent.* Heb. יָקַח *yikan*. This is a common term in reference to *military encampments*, and denotes somewhat of a permanent residence, in opposition to frequent removals and migrations. The root יָקַח *hanah*, differs,

according to Parkhurst, from אָחַל *ahal*, the usual term for *pitching tents*, as *fixing or fastening down* a tent differs from *stretching it out*.

18. *Isaac digged again, &c.* Heb. יָשַׁב וַיַּחפור *yashov vayahpor*, *returned and dug*; i. e. re-dug; not returned to Gerar. Gr. πάλιν ὠρυξε, *dug again*. —¶ *Called their names, &c.* 'This would appear a trifle among us, because water is so abundant that it is scarcely valued, and nobody thinks of perpetuating his name in the name of a well. But in those deserts, where water is so scarce, and wells and springs are valued more, and as they are there the general permanent monuments of geography, it is also an honor to have given them names.'—*Burder*. It is clear, that wherever Abraham sojourned he improved the country; yet it would seem that wherever the Philistines followed him, it was their study to mar his improvements, and they were willing even to deprive themselves of the benefits of his labors rather than to suffer them to remain undisturbed. But as these waters would be doubly sweet to Isaac from having been first tasted by his beloved father, he resolves to open them again, and, to show his filial affection still more, he chooses to call them by the same names by which his father had called them—names which probably carried with them some interesting memorials of the divine favor towards Abraham. 'Many of our enjoyments, both civil and religious, are the sweeter for being the fruits of the labor of our fathers; and if they have been corrupted by adversaries since their days, we

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen,

z ch. 21. 25.

must restore them to their former purity.'—Fuller.

19. *Isaac's servants digged in the valley*; the re-opened well, it would seem, not furnishing an adequate supply of water. He accordingly searches for a richer vein, and succeeds in finding one. The contention that arose, it appears, had respect not to the old wells which he re-opened, but to the new ones which he dug himself. The former were probably somewhere in the near neighborhood of the latter, but of much inferior value, from their scanty supply of water.—¶ *A well of springing water.* Heb. מַיִם חַיִּים *mayim hayim*, *living water*. Waters that run or spring forth from fountains are called, from their continued ebullition, *living*, in opposition to the *stagnant* waters contained in pools and cisterns. Thus Lev. 14. 5, 6, the phrase *running water* is in the original *living water*. Thus, too, Rev. 21. 6, 'I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the *water of life* freely;' i. e. of the fountain of *living water*; though this *living water* is no doubt at the same time a symbol of spiritual blessings as refreshing to the soul as draughts of fresh water to the thirsty traveller. As a large portion of the water made use of in Oriental countries is rain collected in cisterns, we may see how natural it would be to attribute a peculiar value, and apply an expressive name, to springs or streams of *running water*.

20. *The water is ours.* 'The cause of these differences seems to have been, that a question arose whether wells dug by Abraham's and Isaac's people within the territories of Gerar belonged to the people who digged them, or those who enjoyed the territorial right. The real motive of the opposition of the people of Gerar, and their stopping up the wells made by Abraham, seems to have been

saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.

to discourage the visits of such powerful persons to their territory; for otherwise the wells would have been suffered to remain on account of their utility to the nation. Stopping up the wells is still an act of hostility in the East. Mr. Roberts says that it is so in India, where one person who hates another will sometimes send his slaves in the night to fill up the well of the latter, or else to pollute it by throwing in the carcases of unclean animals. However, of all people in the world, none know so well as the Arabs the value of water, and the importance of wells, and hence they never wantonly do them harm. They think it an act of great merit in the sight of God to dig a well; and culpable in an equal degree to destroy one. The wells in the deserts are in general the exclusive property either of a whole tribe, or of individuals whose ancestors dug them. The possession of a well is never alienated; perhaps because the Arabs are firmly persuaded that the owner of a well is sure to prosper in all his undertakings, since the blessings of all who drink his water fall upon him. The stopping of Abraham's wells by the Philistines, the re-opening of them by Isaac, and the restoration of their former names—the commemorative names given to the new wells, and the strifes about them between those who had sunk them and the people of the land—are all circumstances highly characteristic of those countries in which the want of rivers and brooks during summer renders the tribes dependent upon the well for the very existence of the flocks and herds which form their wealth. It would seem that the Philistines did not again stop the wells while Isaac was in their country. It is probable that the wells successively sunk by Isaac did not furnish water sufficient for both his own

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called

the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall <sup>a</sup> be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 17. 6. & 23. 3. & 41. 52. Exod. 1. 7.

herds and those of Gerar, and thus the question became one of exclusive right. Such questions often lead to bitter and bloody quarrels in the East; and it was probably to avoid the last result of an appeal to arms that Isaac withdrew out of the more settled country towards the Desert, where he might enjoy the use of his wells in peace. Whether the wells sunk or re-opened by Isaac were subservient to the agricultural pursuits mentioned in v. 12, does not appear; but, having stated the importance of water to the shepherds, we may subjoin its value to the agriculturist, as exemplified in Persia. In that country, the government duty on agricultural produce is always regulated according to the advantages or disadvantages of the soil with respect to water. Those lands that depend solely on rain, are almost never cultivated; those that are watered from wells or reservoirs pay five per cent. on the produce: those that get a supply of water from aqueducts pay fifteen per cent., and those that have the advantage of a flowing stream pay twenty per cent. These rates are after deducting the seed, and allowing ten per cent. for the reapers and threshers. (See Malcolm's 'History of Persia,' vol. ii. p. 473.)—¶ *Esek*. That is, *contention, strife, wrangling*. The Gr. renders the clause, 'And they called the name of the well ἀδικίαν, ἡδικησαν γὰρ αὐτον, *injury (or wrong), because they injured (or wronged) him*.' 'It is often the lot of even the most quiet and peaceable, that, though they avoid striving, they cannot avoid being striven with. In this sense Jeremiah was a man of contention,' Jer 15. 10, and

Christ himself, though the Prince of Peace.'—*Henry*.

21. *Sitnah*. That is, *hatred, spitefulness*. From the same root with 'Sitnah,' (viz. סִטְנָה *satan*) is derived 'Satan' *an adversary, or hater*, a well-known appellation of the Evil Spirit.

22. *Rehoboth*. That is, *room, enlargement, free space*; a plural term in the original, and properly conveying the idea of *amplitude* with special emphasis. The two former names carried with them by implication a charge of *wrongful strife* and *hostility* against the Philistines, who had thus defrauded him of the fruit of his labor, while the latter was expressive of his gratitude to God, whose kind providence had at length removed him beyond the region of these molestations and conflicts. The Psalmist, in acknowledging, Ps. 4. 2, the divine deliverance, makes use of a term derived from the same root, 'Thou hast enlarged me (לִי הִרְחַבְתָּ לִי *hirhabta li*, thou hast made room for me) when I was in distress.'

23. *He went up from thence to Beer-sheba*. With the reasons which led to this removal we are not made acquainted. He would naturally feel attached to the place where Abraham had sojourned, where he had so often called his household together for the worship of Jehovah, and where every object would serve to remind the son of the covenant blessings pledged to the father. But, whatever were his immediate inducements, it was obviously a step preparatory, on the part of God, to a larger measure of consolation than he had for some time afforded to his servant. After having been insulted and outraged

24 And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, <sup>b</sup> *I am the God of Abraham thy father:* <sup>c</sup> fear not, for <sup>d</sup> *I am* with thee, and

<sup>b</sup> ch. 17. 7. & 24. 12. & 28. 13. Exod. 3. 6. Acts 7. 32. <sup>c</sup> ch. 15. 1. <sup>d</sup> ver. 3, 4.

by the Philistines, he needed especial encouragement; and God immediately appears to comfort and support him in his trials by a renewal of his promises. 'Because,' says Calvin, 'one word of God weighs more with the faithful than the greatest abundance of earthly good, it is not to be doubted that this revelation was more precious to Isaac than if a thousand rivers had flown with nectar. And Moses must be presumed to have set forth this gracious manifestation with the express design of teaching us so to estimate the gifts of God, as ever to assign the palm to the testimony of his paternal love imparted through his word. Food, raiment, health, peace, and all our prosperous issues, give us, indeed, a taste of the divine beneficence; but it is only when he familiarly addresses us, and makes himself known as our father, that we are filled to satiety.'

24. *And the Lord appeared unto him, &c.* No doubt by the usual visible symbol of the Shekinah. Such appearances would tend to quicken attention, confirm faith, and inspire reverence towards the word uttered. The vision of the eye would deepen the impression made by a simple voice, and remove every doubt of the *reality* of the revelation. Satan may indeed transform himself into an angel of light, and play off his illusions upon a distempered or corrupt imagination; but the visions of God's glory carry their own evidence with them, and exempt their subjects from the danger of mistake. Such revelations, however, are necessarily partial. The full display of the Godhead is never to be understood by such expressions as that of the text; for human nature, in its feebleness, would sink at once under such an overpowering disclosure. God

will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he \* builded an altar there,

\* ch. 12. 7. & 13. 18.

appeared to Isaac only so far as he was enabled to bear it.—¶ *I am the God of, Abraham, &c.* These promises are the same for substance as were made to him on his going to Gerar, v. 2—4. But the same truths are new to us under new circumstances, and touch our hearts with all their original sustaining and refreshing power. This prefatory declaration would at once renew the memory of all the promises before made, and direct the mind of Isaac to that abiding covenant entered into with Abraham, and to be transmitted to his posterity. A self-righteous spirit would perhaps have been offended at the idea of being blessed *for another's sake*; but he who walked in the steps of his father's faith would enjoy it; and by how much he loved him for whose sake it was bestowed, by so much would his enjoyment be the greater.

25. *He builded an altar there, &c.* As an expression of his grateful sense of the divine goodness on the present occasion, and as a part of his habitual practice as a pious man, he set up the *stated* worship of God on the spot which had been consecrated by similar observances in the days of his father. Gen. 12. 7.—13. 18. 'We are no better than brute beasts if, contenting ourselves with a natural use of the creatures, we rise not up to the Author; if, instead of being temples of his praise, we become graves of his benefits. Isaac first built an altar, and then digged a well.'—*Trapp.*—¶ *Pitched his tent there.* Heb. *צִיץ* yet, stretched out, extended. This is not the word usually employed to signify the act of *pitching*, *planting*, or *locating* a tent; but properly implies that kind of *extension* in an encampment of tents which would be caused by an addition



and 'called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 ¶ Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one

<sup>c</sup>Ps. 116. 17.

to the number of occupants. The original term occurs Is. 54. 2, 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them *stretch forth* the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, strengthen thy stakes.' This affords the true clew to the meaning of the passage before us. Isaac's regular maintenance of the worship of God was the means of gathering to his establishment a considerable number of proselytes, and this was the reason of his *stretching* or *extending* his tent, or rather his *tents*, as the import of the term is plural.—

¶ *There Isaac's servants digged a well.* It cannot but appear singular that when this place had received its name from a well, Isaac should again have sought to find water, especially as Abraham had purchased the right of the well for himself and his posterity. Add to this, that the digging of a well in that rocky region was a very arduous undertaking, as is clearly intimated by the fact of the discovery of water being communicated to Isaac, v. 32, as a very important piece of intelligence. Why then was a new well attempted to be dug? The probability, we think is, that from a malignant opposition to his character or his religion, there was a concerted plan among the natives, to drive that holy man from their territories by cutting off the necessary supply of water for his flocks and herds, and that in the execution of this nefarious project, they had stopped up this well at Beer-sheba, as well as the others mentioned above.

26. *Abimelech went to him.* One would scarcely have expected that after driving him, in a manner, out of their country, the Philistines would have had any

of his friends, <sup>e</sup>and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing <sup>h</sup>ye hate me, and have <sup>i</sup>sent me away from you?

<sup>e</sup>ch. 21. 22.

<sup>h</sup>Judg. 11. 7.

<sup>i</sup>ver. 16.

more to say to him. But Abimelech and some of his courtiers are induced to pay him a visit. They were not easy when he was with them, and now they seem hardly satisfied when he has left them. Afraid, probably, of his growing power, and conscious that they had treated him unkindly, they now seem to wish for their own sakes to adjust these differences before they proceeded any farther.—¶ *Ahuzzath one of his friends.* Heb. אֶחָד מֵרֵעָיו *Ahuzzath mereahu*. This is rendered appellatively by the Chal. 'A company or retinue of his friends.' The Gr. more plausibly regards it as a proper name, rendering it Οχοζαθ ο νυμφαγωγος αυτου, *Ochozath his paranymphe*; i. e. the leader of the bride, or he who conducts the bride from her father's house to the house of her future husband. The same word occurs in the Gr. version of Judg. 14, 22, rendered in the Eng. translation *companion*. See Note in loc. In the New Testament, the same personage is called *the friend of the bridegroom*, John, 3. 29.

27. *Isaac said unto them, &c.* Isaac, while they acted as enemies, bore it patiently, as a part of his lot in an evil world; but now that they want to be thought friends, and to renew covenant with him, he feels keenly, and speaks his mind; 'Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me,' &c. We can bear that from an avowed adversary which we cannot bear from a professed friend; nor is it any transgression of the law of meekness and love plainly to signify our strong perception of the injuries received, and to stand on our guard in dealing with those who have once acted unfairly.

28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD<sup>k</sup> was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee :

29 That thou wilt do us no hurt,

\* ch. 21. 22, 23.

28. *We saw certainly, &c.* Heb. רָאִינוּ רַאֲנוּ *raah rainu, seeing we saw.* Had they, then, any true regard for Isaac's God, or for him on that account? We fear not. But 'when a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies shall be at peace with him,' and there is something sacred in the character of a good man, to which the wicked often pay an involuntary tribute of respect and admiration. Discarding the envy which he may have cherished, he comes to do homage to a man highly favored of the Lord. The worst of men often find it for their interest to live on good terms with the wise and the pious, while the good cleave to each other not from policy, but from affection.—¶ *That the Lord was with thee.* Chal. 'That the Word of the Lord was thine help.' Such a confession from such a source is fraught with a useful lesson. When profane or worldly men pronounce him blessed of the Lord, whose temporal affairs prosper, they do in effect acknowledge that God is the sole author of every good; and if others refer our mercies to this source, we shall be guilty of enormous ingratitude not to express for ourselves the same devout recognition of the divine benefits.—¶ *Let there be now an oath, &c.* Heb. אָלַהּ *alah, an oath of execration.* Gr. *apa, a curse*; i. e. an oath imprecating a curse upon the breaker of it. The Chal., however, understands it somewhat differently; 'Let now the oath which was between our fathers be confirmed between us and thee.'—¶ *Make a covenant.* Heb. 'Cut a covenant;' as usual.

as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: <sup>1</sup> thou *art* now the blessed of the LORD.

30 <sup>m</sup> And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

<sup>1</sup> ch. 24. 31. Ps. 115. 15. <sup>m</sup> ch. 19. 3.

29. *That thou wilt do us, &c.* Heb. 'If thou shalt do us,' &c. 'That is, 'taking a curse upon thee, if thou shalt do us hurt.'—¶ *As we have not touched thee, &c.* We cannot, of course, but commend Abimelech and his people for wishing to be on good terms with such a man as Isaac, but what shall be thought of their assertion that they 'had done unto him nothing but good, and had sent him away in peace?' Surely they must have known, and he must have felt, the contrary to be true. They had, indeed, at first, in a courteous manner, shown the rites of hospitality to Isaac, but ere long their kindness was changed to hatred, and this hatred to persecution. But this is the very spirit of the native self-complacency of the human heart, and a specimen of its proneness to lose sight of its own demerits. We magnify the slightest offices of good neighborhood into such stupendous acts of charity, that they completely eclipse all other conduct of a contrary description.—¶ *Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.* As if he should say, 'Since God hath so abundantly blessed thee, thou canst afford to forget the slight annoyance experienced from the contention of our servants with thine.'

30. *And he made them a feast, &c.* As Isaac was of a peaceable spirit, and unwilling to sharpen the reproaches which their own consciences administered to them, he admitted their plea, though a poor one, and treated them generously. The providing and partaking of a banquet by the parties appears to have been a usual appendage to the ratifying of a covenant. See Gen. 31. 54.

31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and <sup>a</sup>swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 21. 31.

31. *Sware one to another.* Heb. אִישׁ לְאָחִיו *ish leahiv, a man to his brother.* Gr. *εκαστος τῷ πλησίον, each to his neighbor.*

33. *Called it Shebah.* Heb. שִׁבְעָה *shebah.* That is, he confirmed and ratified this name, which had been before given it by Abraham, Gen. 21. 31, varying it, however, by the addition of the emphatic letter ה *h*, which may perhaps have been intended to convey the idea of *fullness, satisfaction*, resulting from the blessing obtained. Or the meaning may be, that the name had been given by Abraham to the 'place,' i. e. *the region*, in which the well was situated; but that it was now given to the particular spot near the well, where the city of Beer-sheba was afterwards built. However this may be, such, at any rate, was the name (Beer-sheba) by which the city was subsequently called to the time when the history was written.

34. *Took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite.* From the period mentioned in the preceding verse, a delightful calm of eighteen years ensued, of which no record remains for our instruction, but which, from the well-known character of Isaac, we cannot doubt was so passed as to be had in everlasting remembrance with God. At the end of that period, his domestic peace was again disturbed by the waywardness of his favorite son. The patriarch bore in mind the extreme anxiety of his father Abraham lest he should form an

33 And he called it Shebah <sup>a</sup> therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

34 ¶ <sup>p</sup> And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite :

35 Which <sup>q</sup> were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 21. 31. <sup>p</sup> ch. 36. 2. <sup>q</sup> ch. 27. 46. & 28. 1, 8.

idolatrous connexion, and therefore, animated by the same pious sentiments, he was naturally desirous that his sons should follow his example. How then must his paternal feelings have been shocked to find his favorite Esau, without consulting him, introducing two Canaanitish wives at once into the holy family! In this high-handed measure there was a double evil. It was, on the one hand, being unequally yoked with infidelity; and, on the other, it was upholding a practice which has ever been, and ever will be, fatal to domestic peace. The daughter of an Hittite would naturally be disposed to interrupt the religious harmony that prevailed; and two wives at once would as certainly be disposed to annoy each other, and embroil the whole household in their quarrels. The consequences, we learn, were precisely such as might have been anticipated. Both the parents were grieved, and their lives embittered, by the step. Such is the return which parents are sometimes fated to meet with for all that profusion of tenderness and affection which they lavish upon their offspring; for all their wearisome days and sleepless nights.

35. *Which were a grief of mind, &c.* Heb. בִּרְדָּה רַחַח *morath ruah, a bitterness of spirit.* Gr. *ἡσαν ἐπιζήσουςαι* were contentious with Isaac and Rebekah. Chal. 'They were rebellious and stubborn against the mandate of Isaac and Rebekah.' The idea of both these an-

## CHAPTER XXVII.

AND it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and <sup>a</sup> his eyes

<sup>a</sup> ch. 48. 10. 1 Sam. 3. 2.

cient versions accords with what some have thought to be the true sense of the Hebrew, viz. that they were of a *rebellious spirit*, as the original מַרְרָה *marar*, to be bitter, or from מָרַר *marah*, to rebel. The sense is, no doubt, substantially the same, whichever etymology we adopt; but as the grammatical form of the word favors the former construction, and as we find elsewhere, Prov. 14. 10, the parallel phrase מַרְרַת נַפְשׁ *marrah nephesh*, bitterness of soul, we conclude that that is the more correct of the two. The Jerusalem Targum attributes to them the positive practice of idolatry;—‘They served God with strange service, and received not the instruction of Isaac or Rebekah.’ But the disquiet which it produced, was no doubt overruled to a happy result. Had the aged couple found these daughters-in-law mild, gentle, and amiable in their deportment, it is easy to see that this circumstance might have tended gradually to work a kindly spirit towards the reprobate race from which they sprang, and led in the end perhaps to a general amalgamation of two peoples designed by God to be kept perpetually distinct. But the domestic jars which arose from this ill-assorted union, went undoubtedly to counteract any undue bias in this direction in the minds of Isaac and Rebekah. Thus a wise and benignant providence extracts good out of evil.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

The life of Isaac may be divided into three periods. The first, containing seventy-five years, from his birth to the death of Abraham, during which, being under parental government, and of a meek, unassuming disposition, his history is blended with and included in that

were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*.

of his father. The second, commencing at his father's death, and ending in his one hundred and thirty-seventh year, when it pleased God to visit him with extreme weakness, and a total loss of eye-sight, contains the space of sixty-two years, which may be called his active period. To this succeeds a dreary period of forty-three years to the day of his death, during which we see an infirm, dark old man, holding fast, on the whole, his integrity and his confidence in God, but placed by his physical and mental infirmities so much at the disposal of others, as to become inadvertently the source of the most trying embarrassments and disunions in his own family. How this happened, it is the object of the present chapter to relate; and in following the thread of the narrative, we are struck with the feature so peculiar to the inspired historians of merely relating their story without interposing any comments of their own. In the account of Jacob's obtaining the blessing by subtlety from his father, no censure is passed upon his conduct by Moses; and an inadvertent reader might consider it only in the light of a trick, displaying considerable ingenuity of contrivance, and dexterity of execution, but not, perhaps, as involving any special moral delinquency. But though the sacred writer does not stop to descant upon Jacob's guilt, yet the subsequent history plainly discovers a just providence punishing his sin, and reads to us a most instructive lesson on the baneful effects of fraud.

1. *When Isaac was old.* The age to which he had now attained is stated above. He seems for some reason to have been impressed with the idea that he was at this time near his end, though he lived upwards of forty years from

2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I <sup>b</sup> know not the day of my death.

3 <sup>c</sup> Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and

<sup>b</sup> Prov. 27. 1. Jam. 4. 14. <sup>c</sup> ch. 25. 27, 28.

the date of this event.—¶ Called Esau his eldest son. Heb. עֶשָׂו בֶּנִי הַגָּדוֹל *Esau beno haggadol, Esau his son the great*; i. e. the greater or older; a usage already explained, Gen. 10. 21.—25. 23. The whole of the ensuing narrative makes it plain that, notwithstanding Esau's perverse and undutiful carriage towards his father in marrying into the stock of Canaan, he was still the object of his doting partiality.

3. *Thy weapons.* The Heb. כֶּלִי *kele* signifies properly *vessels, implements, utensils* of any kind; and it is probable that our Eng. word 'weapons,' instead of being exclusively applied to *armor, or warlike instruments*, was formerly used in a like general sense. The old Geneva version has, more correctly, 'instruments.'—¶ Take me some venison. Heb. צִידָה לִי צִידָה *tzudah li tzayidah, hunt me a hunting*, i. e. game, of whatever kind.

4. *Make-me savoury meat.* Heb. מַטַּמִּים *matammim*, from טַעַם *taam, to taste*. 'There are several points in this account that require explanation. One is, how it happened that Isaac should direct Esau to go hunting, to get him venison, when, as it seems from the result, a 'kid of the goats' (that is, a young kid still sucking the dam) would have done as well. The fact is that the oriental shepherds seldom, except to entertain a stranger, think of diminishing their flocks to supply themselves with meat. They are as glad of any game that falls in their way as if they had not a sheep or goat in their possession; and it was quite natural that such 'a cunning hunter' as Esau should rather be directed to go out into the fields and shoot game

thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some* venison;

4 And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul <sup>d</sup> may bless thee before I die.

<sup>d</sup> ver. 27. ch. 48. 9, 15. & 49. 28. Deut. 33. 1.

than to go and fetch kids from the flock. Another thing is, how the flesh of young kids could be imposed upon Isaac for venison: but if by venison is to be understood the flesh of a young gazelle, which is by no means clear, the difference between it and that of a young kid is not great, as we know from personal experience; and a still greater difference would be lost, even to persons with senses more acute than Isaac's were at this time, when disguised by the strong flavors, salt, spicy, sour, or sweet, which the Orientals are fond of giving to their more luxurious dishes. We have often hesitated at an oriental supper to determine of what meat the strongly-seasoned, or highly-acidulated, or sweetened, messes set before us were composed. As Isaac intended a particular indulgence, there is no doubt that the utmost resources of patriarchal cookery were employed upon the dish prepared for him. The word 'matammim' has a more extensive signification than the word 'savoury,' here used to translate it. It means in general any thing highly grateful to the taste, and may express any of the more self-indulgent preparations admired by the Orientals; all whose most esteemed dishes are saturated with butter or fat—highly seasoned with salt, spices, garlic, and onions—sharpened with vegetable acids, or sweetened with honey or vegetable sweets. Sometimes the oleaginous, the saline, the spicy, the sweet, and the sour, concur to aggrandize and mystify the same dish. If Jacob's kids had been roasted whole, in the way formerly mentioned, after being stuffed with raisins, pistachio nuts, almonds, and

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son: and Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

6 ¶ And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

husked corn or rice, the result would have been a most savoury dish, now much admired in the East, and which a man with all his senses in perfection would not readily distinguish from a young gazelle similarly treated.' *Pict. Bible*.—¶ *That my soul may bless thee, &c.* That is, that I may bless thee, as v. 7; *soul* being often used in Heb. for one's person. See Note on Gen. 2. 7. But wherein consisted the blessing which was now about to be bestowed, and why was savory meat required in order to the bestowment of it? It cannot be doubted that, from such a father as Isaac, a common blessing was to be expected on all his children; but in this family, there was a peculiar blessing pertaining to the first born—a solemn, extraordinary, prophetic benediction, entailing the covenant blessing of Abraham, with all the promises, temporal and spiritual, belonging to it, and by which his posterity were to be distinguished as God's peculiar people. This was the blessing which Isaac was now about to bestow, and, by way of preparative to the solemn act, he calls for a dish of his favorite food. The reason of this is not entirely obvious; but, as the transmission of the covenant blessing was supposed to be performed with the special and powerful concurrence of the Holy Spirit, very great weight and solemnity were attached to it; and as certain states of the animal system were supposed to be more favorable than others to the illapses of the Spirit, as is evident from the effect of music on the prophets, 2 Kings 3. 14, 15, it is not unlikely that Isaac designed, by eating savory meat and drinking wine, v. 25, so to revive the languid tone of nature, so to refresh and exhilarate all his physical

powers, that, like an instrument of music perfectly attuned, he might render himself a more fit organ of the oracular impulses of the Holy Ghost. At the same time we cannot but regard the suggestion of Adam Clarke, on this subject as highly plausible, viz: 'That, as eating and drinking were used among the Asiatics on almost all religious occasions, it is reasonable to suppose that something of this kind was essentially necessary on this occasion; and that Isaac could not convey the right, till he had eaten of the meat provided for the purpose by him who was to receive the blessing.' This hypothesis may be admitted in entire consistency with what we have said of the patriarch's design to refresh himself by suitable and grateful nourishment for the work before him. As to his purpose of conferring the blessing upon Esau rather than upon Jacob, it is, perhaps, too much to affirm that in this he went *intentionally* counter to the divine counsels. We cannot be positively certain that he was acquainted with the oracle, Gen. 25. 23, announcing that the elder should serve the younger, or that he knew of Esau's selling his birth-right; still, it is not easy to conceive of his having been ignorant of them; and just in proportion to the probability of his being informed on this head is the difficulty of accounting for his conduct. As the sacred narrative affords us no clue on the subject, we are, perhaps, shut up to a merely hypothetical solution, viz. that, his partiality for Esau, and the custom of the elder son being heir, led him to forget, misunderstand, or disregard the previous intimation of the divine will.

6—10. *And Rebekah spake unto Jacob, &c.* We now come to a detailed ac-

7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord, before my death.

count of the stratagem by which the blessing was diverted from Esau, and conferred upon Jacob; and we cannot but pause in astonishment, at beholding a person of Rebekah's exemplary character devising such a plot, and a plain man like Jacob, executing it in accordance with her wishes—a plot to deceive a holy and aged man, a husband, a parent, in the very hour of his expected decease, and in a transaction of the most sacred importance. We cannot, indeed, suppose this to have been their ordinary mode of acting; and this renders it not a little surprising that they should all at once have shown themselves such proficients in the arts of dissimulation and fraud. But, although the measure was utterly unjustifiable and base, yet, as we cannot at this distance of time, put ourselves into the precise position of the parties, nor possess ourselves of the exact state of mind by which it was prompted, this fact should somewhat soften our condemnation. On the one hand, it is clear that God designed that Jacob should have the blessing, and that Rebekah was aware of this design. There is every reason to believe, also, that she highly prized the blessing, and was influenced by a principle of sincere faith in seeking to obtain it; and so far she is to be commended. But the scheme which she formed to compass the end was exceedingly culpable. She had no right to suppose that treachery and falsehood, were under any circumstances, admissible in bringing about the divine purposes. It is as high presumption for men to think that their cunning is needed to accomplish God's purposes, as that by their cunning they can defeat them. Rebekah's was, therefore, a crooked policy, wholly at variance with the simplicity of a child of God; and not only so, it was an expedient that

was not barely *sinful*, but *unnecessary*. As she had been assured by a divine oracle that the elder should serve the younger, as the birthright was transferable, and Jacob had actually purchased it, the proper course would have been for her and Jacob, to have set the matter plainly before Isaac; and by arguments, expostulations, and entreaties, urged him thus to comply with what was evidently the will of heaven. Isaac was a pious man, and would scarcely have dared to set himself knowingly against the counsels of God. This should have been their first effort, and, had it failed, still they should have borne it in mind that God was able to overrule his actions and to constrain him, as he afterwards did Jacob himself, to cross his hands, and, even against his will, to transfer the blessing to him for whom it was designed. They should have committed the result implicitly to him. He might be safely left with the execution of his own purposes. The sin of deceiving a man into what is right, differs little from the sin of deceiving him into what is wrong. The *effect* of the sin may indeed be different, but its moral character, in the eyes of Omniscience, is substantially the same. On the whole, after every abatement, we cannot but severely condemn the conduct of Rebekah and Jacob. The slightest deviation from the straight-forward principles of integrity and honesty, is contrary to the very genius and actings of a true faith; and though the event was overruled to good, yet this was no justification of the parties concerned. Evil ceases not to be evil, because God makes it redound to his glory.—¶ *Bless thee before the Lord.* That is, with special solemnity, with a blessing to be pronounced as in the divine presence, and sanctioned by the divine authority

8 Now therefore, my son, <sup>c</sup> obey my voice, according to that which I command thee.

9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them <sup>f</sup> savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

10 And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and

ver. 13.

<sup>f</sup> ver. 4.

that he <sup>g</sup> may bless thee before his death.

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, <sup>h</sup> Esau my brother *is* an hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

12 My father peradventure will <sup>i</sup> feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring <sup>k</sup> a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

<sup>g</sup> ver. 4.<sup>h</sup> ch. 25. 25.<sup>i</sup> ver. 22.<sup>k</sup> ch. 9. 25. Deut. 27. 18.

11. *And Jacob said to Rebekah, &c.* The feelings of Jacob instinctively revolt at the proposition of his mother, and he remonstrates against it. Would that he had duly heeded the warning of the internal monitor, which, with far greater authority than that of Rebekah, was saying to him, 'Obey my voice, according to that which I command thee!' But the remonstrance, such as it was, loses nearly all its merit by being founded on the *consequences* of the act, and not on the *act itself*. He seems not to have been struck by the enormity of the deed as an offence against God. How great the contrast between his reasoning on this occasion, and that of his son Joseph when assaulted by a powerful temptation. 'I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing,' said the one; 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,' said the other. But we learn from the sequel, that as he now sowed, so he afterwards reaped.

12. *I shall seem to him as a deceiver.* Heb. כִּמְתָאָה כִּי־הָיִיתִי kimtataa, as *one that causeth greatly to err*, or, as *a very deceiver*. The original from יָעַר *to wander, to err*, is of an intensive form, conveying a meaning, the exact shade of which cannot well be transfused into English. Gr. 'As one despising him.' Chal. 'As one mocking him.' The particle 'as' is often used in the Scriptures, to signify, not *similitude*, but *reality*, or the thing itself; thus, Ob. 1. 11, 'Thou wast as one of them;' i. e. wast

one. Deut. 9. 10, 'On them (the tables) was written *according to all the words*;' Heb. 'as all the words;' Neh. 7. 2, 'For he was a faithful man;' Heb. *as a faithful man*.' John 1. 14, 'We beheld his glory, the glory *as of the only begotten of the Father*;' i. e. simply, the glory of the only begotten; 2 Cor. 3. 18, 'Are changed into the same image *as by the Spirit of the Lord*;' i. e. *by the Spirit*.—¶ *Shall bring a curse.* That his fears on this head were well founded, appears evident from the following passage in the Law, Deut. 27. 18, 'Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way.'—¶ *Upon me be the curse.* Chal. 'It was said unto me by prophecy, that curses shall not come upon thee, but blessings.' By Jacob's curse she meant the curse that he might incur. But her presumption in this case is as much to be censured as her subtlety in the outset. As it was impossible that she could have the full approval of her own conscience in this affair, she run a fearful risk in making such a declaration; and it would argue a very low tone of moral sentiment to imagine that her pledging herself to bear the blame, would at all extenuate the guilt of her sin. There is but one being who ever has said, or could truly say, 'Upon me be thy curse.' The compassionate Saviour of sinners, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' has graciously put himself in such a relation to fallen



13 And his mother said unto him, <sup>1</sup> Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

14 And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother:

<sup>1</sup> ch. 43. 9. 1 Sam. 25. 24. 2 Sam. 14. 9. Matt. 27. 25.

man that he can properly adopt this language, and to him only is it appropriate. Rebekah's words evince, indeed, a great strength of assurance in the divine promise or prediction, but this does not extenuate the fraud she was now practising upon Isaac, nor the bad morality which she was virtually teaching her son.

14. *And he went, &c.* Rebekah takes the consequences upon herself, and then he has no more to object, but does as she instructs him. Had his remonstrance arisen from an aversion to the evil, he would not so readily have yielded to her suggestions. But where temptation finds the heart fortified by nothing stronger than a regard to present consequences, it is very certain to prevail. Let us beware, however, how we are drawn by any authority whatever to the commission of evil. It will be of little avail to say, My adviser was my father, or my mother. There is a plain path, from which no authority under heaven should induce us to swerve.

15. *Rebekah took goodly raiment, &c.* Heb. *החמדות* *hahamudoth*, *desirable*. But whether this 'desirableness' arose from their peculiar make, or from their color, or from some other circumstances which gave them an adventitious preciousness, is uncertain; though we are inclined to give considerable weight to the suggestions that follow. The Gr. has *την στολην την καλην* *the fair stole or robe*. Chal. 'Vestments which were clean.' The 'stole' was a long robe with fringed or flounced borders, usually white, though sometimes purple; and

and his mother <sup>m</sup> made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

15 And Rebekah took <sup>n</sup> goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

<sup>m</sup> ver. 4. 9. <sup>n</sup> ver. 27.

worn by the great as a mark of distinction, Luke 15. 22, and 20. 46, in both which passages the original word for 'robes' is *στολαι* *stoles*. The same word is applied by the Gr. of the Sept. to the 'holy garments' in which the priests ministered under the law, Ex. 28. 2-4, 'And thou shalt make *holy garments* (*στολην αγιαν* *a holy stole*) for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty,' &c. From general usage, therefore, we may regard the 'stole' as a species of vestment appropriated mainly to the sacerdotal office, and perhaps from a very early period preserved and handed down among the patriarchs as a *badge of the birthright*. Such a robe, we are disposed to think, was the many-colored coat of Joseph, the possession of which excited the envy of his brethren, because worn as a sign of the transfer of Reuben's forfeited birthright to Joseph. See Note on Gen. 37. 3. As the privileges and prerogatives included in the birthright had a principal reference to Christ, and were never fully realized but in him 'who is the *first-born* of every creature,' so it can scarcely be questioned that the reason of his being represented in his different apparitions after the resurrection, and when he had entered upon his eternal priesthood, as clothed in a long white garment, is to intimate that the *shadow* of the robe of primogeniture had now passed into its appropriate *substance*. This circumstance was made evident to the senses of the disciples present at our Lord's transfiguration, which was nothing else than an anticipative visible display of the personal glory with which he was

16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck :

17 And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hands of her son Jacob,

18 ¶ And he came unto his father, and said, My father. And he

said. Here *am* I ; who *art* thou, my son ?

19 And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me : arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, ° that thy soul may bless me.

° ver. 4.

to be invested after his resurrection. Accordingly we are told, Mark 9. 2. that among the splendors of the scene, 'his *raiment* became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them.' Well, therefore, might Moses be commanded to make the typical 'stoles' for Aaron and his sons 'for *glory* and for *beauty*.' But as all true Christians are fellow-heirs with Christ, and come into a participation with him in all the consummated blessings of the birthright, being made kings and *priests* unto God, this fact lays the foundation for such allusions as the following, Rev. 3. 4, 5, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me *in white* ; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall be clothed *in white raiment* ;' Rev. 6. 9—11, 'And I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, &c., and *white robes* (Gr. 'white stoles,') were given unto every one of them.' Rev. 7. 9, 'After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, *clothed with white robes* (Gr. 'with white stoles'). All these passages we conceive have a direct allusion to the birthright garments of which the first mention occurs in this history of Jacob and Esau. These 'garments of desire' were, in all probability, the sacred symbolical 'stole' received from their ancestors, and kept by the mother of the family in sweet-scented chests or wardrobes, to preserve them from the

depredations of moths. Targ. Jon. 'And Rebekah took the desirable robes of her elder son Esau, *which had belonged to Adam the first parent*.' In allusion to this aromatic fragrance it is said, v. 27, that 'Isaac smelled the smell of his raiment.' If these were mere common garments, it may be asked why they were in the keeping of Esau's mother, rather than of himself or of his wives, especially as he had been married 37 years, and was now, as well as Jacob, 77 years old ?—¶ *In the house* 'They were certainly living in a tent but it is to this day not unusual to call a tent a house. The word house is used much as we use the word 'home,' being applied quite irrespectively of the sort of domestic habitation denoted by it. The Bedouins always denominate a tent 'a house,' using the same word בֵּית (*beit*) in sound and meaning as the Hebrew word in the text.' *Pict. Bible*.

19. *I am Esau thy first-born*. Our estimate of Jacob's conduct in this stage of the transaction will depend upon the views we entertain of the real drift of this reply. That the words taken in their literal sense convey a direct and positive falsehood is clear ; but it may still be a question whether there were not another sense *intended* by Jacob in his own mind ; one in which the expression *might* be understood so as to free the speaker from the charge of uttering a downright lie. It is, at any rate, contended by some commentators, that, as he had virtually come into the place of Esau by the purchase of the birthright, he

20 And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not.

P ver. 12.

might say that he was the first-born on the same grounds that John the Baptist is called Elias, and the Gentiles termed the circumcision. As it is not supposed that John the Baptist was guilty of a falsehood when he denied that he was Elias, John 1. 21, though our Saviour said that he was, so it is suggested that Jacob's words may be true if interpreted as equivalent to 'I am Esau thy first-born; not in *person*, but in *right*.' But this plea, however specious, besides resting upon a very uncertain basis, does not afford a vindication broad enough to cover all the features of Jacob's crooked policy on this occasion. With Henry we may ask, 'How could he say 'I have done as thou badest me,' when he had received no command from his father, but was doing as his mother bade him? How could he say, 'Eat of my venison, when he knew it came not from the field, but from the fold?' On the whole, we must, we think, be content to leave this humiliating conduct as a blot on the character of Jacob, without apology and without excuse, only observing, that, disgraceful as it was, God could forgive it, and did forgive it, for the sake of a better righteousness than his own.

20. *Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.* Heb. *הקרה לבער hikrah le-phana'i*, made to occur; the appropriate term for expressing a special interposition of providence. See note on Gen. 24. 12. Gr. 'For the Lord thy God delivered it before me.' Chal. 'Because

22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.

23 And he discerned him not, because his *q* hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

q ver. 16.

the Lord prepared it before me.' The answer intimates that his speedy success was owing to a particular divine interference in his behalf! It is not easy to conceive a more daring piece of effrontery than this. It was bad enough to deal in so many gross equivocations; but to bring in the Lord God of his father, in order to give them the appearance of truth, was much worse, and what we should scarcely have expected but from one of the most depraved of men. But this was the natural result of a first wrong step. Little do we know whither we may be drawn if once we depart from the plain direct course of honesty and truth. Jacob probably had no idea of going beyond a little stroke of dissimulation and fraud; yet here we find him treading upon the borders of absolute blasphemy, by making God himself confederate in his sin! Let us beware then of evil in its very first approaches.

23. *He discerned him not, because, &c.* It is remarked by Bochart (Hierozoic. l. ii. c. 51.) that in the eastern countries the goats' hair has often a soft, delicate feel, very much like that upon the human person; so that Isaac might be, without much difficulty, deceived, especially considering that at his advanced age his sense of touch might be nearly as much impaired as that of vision.—¶ *So he blessed him.* That is, after eating and drinking, as mentioned v. 25. The incident is related a little out of its place. It comes in here by anticipation, as the writer intends to say,

24 And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*.

25 And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, <sup>r</sup> that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

<sup>r</sup> ver. 4.

in general terms, that Jacob deceived his father, and thus obtained the blessing; but it is not till afterwards that he proceeds to detail the various particulars that led to it.

26. *Kiss me.* A sign of affection and reverence. Comp. Gen. 48. 10. Ps. 2. 12. His thus coming in contact with his father's person would also afford a proof to the senses, from the peculiar scent of his apparel, in favor of his alleged identity. But it was *deceiving*, if not *betraying*, his father with a kiss.

27. *The smell of my son is as the smell of a field, &c.* Gr. 'The smell of a full, or plenteous, field,' i. e. a field abounding with herbs, fruits, and flowers of every description, regaling the senses with their grateful fragrance. Pliny observes that land, after a long drought, moistened by the rain, exhales a delightful odor, with which nothing can be compared; and adds, that 'it is a sign of a fruitful soil when it emits an agreeable smell after having been ploughed.' Even the parched herbage of the deserts and uncultivated plains is often exceedingly fragrant, and would, perhaps, be capable of imparting its odor to the garments of Esau, 'a man of the field;' and Poole paraphrases the words of Isaac, 'These garments smell not of the sheep-cotes and stalls, as Jacob's do, but of the fields in which Esau lives.' But the smell in this case was probably occasioned by the aromatic herbs which had been laid

27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, <sup>s</sup> the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

28 Therefore 'God give thee of <sup>u</sup> the dew of heaven, and <sup>w</sup> the fatness of the earth, and <sup>x</sup> plenty of corn and wine:

<sup>s</sup> Hos. 14. 16. <sup>t</sup> Hebr. 11. 20. <sup>u</sup> Deut. 33. 13, 28. <sup>v</sup> 2 Sam. 1. 21. <sup>w</sup> ch. 45. 18. <sup>x</sup> Deut. 33. 28.

up with the clothes, both to prevent their being fretted by the moths, and to give them an agreeable odor. 'The Orientals are proverbially fond of perfumes. They sprinkle their clothes with scented oils or waters, or fumigate them with the incense from odoriferous woods, or carry such woods or fragrant herbs in a small bag, or sewed up in their clothes. Even the great simplicity of their mode of life does not preclude the use of perfumes from the Bedouins, who often perfume their headkerchief with civet, or with an odoriferous earth called *ares*, which comes from Aden, and is much in use among the desert Arabs.' *Pict. Bible*. 'It is not common to *salute* as in England; they simply *smell* each other; and it is said that some people know their children by the smell. It is common for a mother or father to say, 'Ah! child, thy *smell* is like the Sen-Paga-Poo,' (a flower sacred to Chrisna.) The crown of the head is the principal place for *smelling*. Of an amiable man, it is said, 'How sweet is the *smell* of that man! the *smell* of his goodness is universal.' *Roberts*. The Jerusalem Targum gives this more of a mystical import, interpreting it of 'the smell of the perfumes of good spices, that should afterwards be offered in the mount of the house of the sanctuary.'

23. *God give thee of the dew of heaven, &c.* Or, Heb. יִטֵּן *yitten*, will give; at

29 <sup>r</sup> Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee : be lord over thy brethren, and <sup>z</sup> let thy mother's sons bow down to thee :

<sup>r</sup> ch. 9. 25. & 25. 23.

<sup>z</sup> ch. 49. 8.

once a *prayer* and a *prophecy*. 'The value of this blessing cannot be adequately appreciated by the European reader. But in Palestine, and indeed throughout Western Asia, rain rarely if ever falls from April to September, and the heat of the sun being at the same time very strong, all vegetation would be parched and dried up, were it not for the copious dews which fall during the night and completely moisten the ground. Keeping in a fertile condition lands which would otherwise be sterile and desolate. But all this moisture evaporates with astonishing rapidity as soon as the sun has risen. It seems that the advantage of these abundant dews is not generally enjoyed, except in regions more or less hilly or elevated, or in confined valleys. In extensive open plains and deserts it does not seem that any dews fall in summer. But in such tracts no men can inhabit, except the wandering tribes, and towns and villages are only found on the banks of natural or artificial streams ; nor, unless in the same situations, is any cultivation attempted where there are no night dews in summer to compensate for the want of rain. The passage Gen. 2. 5, 6, has led some to suppose that there was no rain, but dew only, previous to the atmospheric and other changes which are conceived to have taken place at the Deluge. If the passage in question affords sufficient foundation for this theory, there could then have been no rainbow previous to the Deluge, and the opinion would be justified which considers that the rainbow was first manifested to Noah, when it was made a token of the covenant between God and man. But see also the note on Gen. 9. 13.' *Pict. Bible.*—<sup>פ</sup> *The fatness of the earth.* Heb. מִשְׁמַן הָאָרֶץ

<sup>a</sup> cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 12. 3. Numb. 24. 9.

מִשְׁמַן הָאָרֶץ *mishman-nai haaretz, of the fatnesses of the earth ; i. e. the choicest and best.* See note on Gen. 4. 4. This includes the land of Canaan for an inheritance, the emblem of all blessedness, and thence termed, Neh. 9. 25—35, *the fat land*. That the language of the whole verse has a sense beyond that of the simple letter ; or in other words, that the blessing was not exhausted in the annunciation of mere *temporal* good things, we think altogether probable. Yet it might savor too much of the Rabbinical mode of interpretation to attempt to give a precise import to these figurative phrases. We perhaps go to the full extent of sober explication, when we say, in general terms, that the 'dew of heaven' and the 'fatness of the earth' shadow out to us the doctrines of the gospel and the graces of the Holy Spirit shed forth upon men ; in fine, the whole inventory of *spiritual mercies* which flow to the holy seed in virtue of the covenant made with Abraham. This is confirmed by the evident drift of the following, among other passages of sacred writ, Deut. 32. 2, Hos. 14. 6, 7, Is. 25. 6,—4. 8. 8. Indeed, so closely analogous is this, in point of phraseology, to the blessing pronounced upon Esau, v. 39, that unless we would make them almost equivalent, it would seem imperative upon us to affix some sense to the words over and above that conveyed by the mere letter.

29. *Let people serve thee, &c.* Heb. עַמִּים *ammim, peoples ;* that is, foreign people, the various hostile nations by which the Israelites were surrounded, viz. the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Philistines, and Edomites, all of whom were effectually subdued in the days of David.—<sup>פ</sup> *Be lord over thy brethren, &c.*

30 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father; and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and <sup>b</sup>eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 4.

In these words was ratified to Jacob the principal prerogative of the birthright, viz. that of pre-eminence over the rest of the family. It is to be understood, however, mainly of his posterity; for Esau was never *personally* in subjection to Jacob. The elements of the blessing, we perceive, were three-fold, consisting of the promise (1) of worldly wealth and prosperity; (2) of dominion or empire; (3) of family pre-eminence. It is somewhat remarkable that the blessing should be pronounced in such general terms, that there should be no more *express* mention of those crowning spiritual mercies connected with the promised land, which are commonly supposed to have constituted the burden of the patriarchal benediction. While it is rich in the promise of *earthly* good, there is no distinct allusion to *heavenly*. This is perhaps to be accounted for simply by saying that such partial intimations were in keeping with the nature of that early dispensation. It was mainly an economy of shadows and symbols. None of the patriarchs appear to have been favored with *explicit* revelations of the good things promised. The earthly Canaan was to them a pledge and a type of the heavenly, and in that it would seem they were required to read about all that it was given them to know of their eternal inheritance. Other commentators give other explanations on this point, but perhaps none more satis-

32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy first-born, Esau.

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, <sup>c</sup>and he shall be blessed.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 23. 3, 4. Rom. 11. 29.

factory; as, after all our efforts, we are obliged to confess that, in regard to the actual amount of knowledge possessed by the ancient believers, of the gospel mysteries, we are still left in utter uncertainty. In all probability the clearness of their knowledge was greatly disproportioned to the strength of their faith. But we are obliged to speak doubtfully on the whole subject.

30—33.—*And it came to pass, &c.*—Jacob has succeeded in clandestinely and surreptitiously obtaining the blessing, and in view of the result we can hardly refrain from asking, how a blessing obtained by such means can be a blessing. Certainly we are ready to say that Jacob had about as much ground of deep repentance for thus *obtaining* the blessing, as Esau for *losing* it. Yet the secret purposes of Heaven are thus often accomplished, while they receive no taint from the corrupt and contaminating agencies with which they are interwoven.—But the issue of the transaction is now to be detailed. Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, when Esau, returning from the chase, came to the bedside of the Patriarch, and presented him venison. This at once discovered the imposition. The consequence was what might have been expected.—¶ *Isaac trembled very exceedingly.* Heb. יִחְרַד יִחְרַד גְּדֹלָה עַד yeherah yeherah gedolah ad meod, trembled (with) a great trembling exceedingly. Gr. 'Was thrown into an

34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, <sup>d</sup> he cried with

<sup>d</sup>Hebr. 12. 17.

ecstasy of astonishment.' Chal. 'Wondered with an exceedingly great admiration.' His emotions were absolutely overwhelming. On the one hand he could not but feel a degree of just *indignation* in view of the imposition which had been practised upon him, especially when he remembered the precautions he had taken against being thus deceived; yet, on the other, a moment's reflection would convince him that the transfer of the blessing must have been 'of the Lord,' and consequently that he had all along been acting against his will in designing to have it otherwise. Two such considerations, rushing on his mind at once, like two impetuous counter-currents coming together, sufficiently account for his feelings, especially when we add his consciousness of the irrevocable nature of the blessing, and the momentous consequences annexed to it. But, while he resents the subtlety of Jacob and the unkindness of Rebekah, he acknowledges and acquiesces in the will of God. 'The blessing which he had unwittingly pronounced, and which he knows to be irrevocable, he deliberately and solemnly confirms; 'I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed.' His feelings would perhaps be not inaptly expressed by the language of Balaam, Num. 23: 19, 20, 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.' Hence, probably, it is that the Apostle, Heb. 12. 17, affirms that Esau 'found no place for repentance, though he sought carefully with tears.' That is, he found no place for repentance, or change of purpose, *in his father*. He could not prevail upon

a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, *even* me also, O my father!

him to reverse the word that had proceeded from his lips. The blessing had been solemnly conferred and confirmed, and could not now be revoked. From that passage, therefore, we can infer nothing positive as to Esau's final salvation.

34. *Cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry.* The language is very emphatic, and describes a poignancy of grief amounting to positive anguish. The time had now come that he bitterly bewailed his folly in despising and throwing away his birthright for so trifling a consideration—a proof that the visitation of crimes often sleeps for a time, and that vengeance may awake when the misdeed itself is almost forgotten. 'Why did he not rather weep to his brother for the pottage than to Isaac for a blessing? If he had not then sold, he had not needed now to buy. It is just with God to deny us those favors which we were careless in keeping, and which we undervalued in enjoying. How happy a thing is it to know the seasons of grace, and not to neglect them! How desperate to have known and neglected them! These tears are both late and false.'—*Bp. Hall*. In like manner, the time will come when all who profanely neglect the proffered mercies of Christ, and practically barter away their hopes and prospects of eternal life for sinful indulgences, will mourn in bitterness of spirit the loss of the blessings which they have so thoughtlessly despised. Still it would appear, that in the case of Esau, in the midst of all his regrets, there was no *real contrition*, no godly sorrow of heart, but only disappointment and vexation at his loss. We find at the time no self-condemnation, no confession of his sin, but a severe accusation of his brother, as if *he* only were to blame for what had happened. Neither does he give any evidence of having been a true penitent

35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

36 And he said, 'Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: 'he took away my birth-right; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

37 And Isaac answered and said

\* ch. 25. 26.

† ch. 25. 33.

afterwards, for his heart was evidently full of rage and enmity towards his brother, under the influence of which he determines on a fit opportunity to put an end to his life. All this shows a state of mind at the widest possible remove from sincere repentance.

36. *Is he not rightly named, &c.* Heb. *הכרי קרא שמר* *haki kara shemo*. There seems to be nothing in the original answering to 'rightly' in our version. The word *הכרי* *haki*, compounded of the interrogation *הא* *ha*, *whether*, and *כרי* *ki*, *that*, implies no more than a simple question, 'Is it because his name is called Jacob?' The rendering of the whole clause by Junius and Tremellius, is a little different from ours, yet perhaps equally correct; 'Is it not because his name is called Jacob (supplanter) that he has supplanted me this second time?'—† *He hath supplanted me.* Heb. *יעקבני* *yakebani*; in obvious allusion to Jacob's name, (*יעקב* *yaakob*), of which he here gives a caviling interpretation; as much as to say, that his brother had shown himself well entitled to his name. It cannot be denied that there was some ground for the reflections thus cast upon Jacob. He had indeed acted the part of a *supplanter* in a way altogether unjustifiable; still the statement was exaggerated. Esau was not warranted in saying, 'He took away my birthright,' as though he robbed him of it; for the surrender was his own voluntary act. He parted with

unto Esau, \* Behold I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and <sup>b</sup> with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his voice, <sup>i</sup> and wept.

\* 2 Sam. 8. 14. ver. 29. <sup>b</sup> ver. 28. <sup>i</sup> Hebr. 12. 17.

it because he practically despised it. But it is no unusual thing for men to act as if accusing others were the most effectual mode of justifying themselves.

37. *I have made him thy lord.* Heb. *שמתיך* *samtiv*, *I have put, appointed*; i. e. I have declaratively made him so.—

† *All his brethren have I given*; i. e. declared that they shall be given.—

‡ *With corn and wine have I sustained him*; i. e. declared that he shall be sustained. Gr. *εσθησιζα* *have strengthened*. Comp. Ps. 104. 15. Isaac, in using this language, is not to be considered as giving vent to a self-sufficient or self-complacent spirit; it is the ordinary prophetic style. Men speaking by inspiration are often said to *do* that which they merely *announce shall be done*. Thus, Ezek. 43. 3, 'The vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city;' i. e. to foretell its destruction. Jer. 1. 10, 'I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant;' i. e. to predict that these all things shall be done. Jer. 15. 1, 'Cast them (this people) out of my sight;' i. e. announce to them that they shall be cast out. Gen. 41. 13, 'Me he restored and him he hanged;' i. e. foretold these events. Ezek. 21. 26, 'Remove the diadem, take off the crown, exalt him that is low, abase him that is high;' i. e. predict that these events shall occur.



39 And Isaac his father answered, and said unto him, Behold, <sup>k</sup> thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above ;

40 And by thy sword shalt thou

<sup>k</sup> ver. 28. Hebr. 11. 20.

39. *Thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, &c.* Heb. מִשְׁמַנֵּי *mish-manne*, from the fatness, &c. Taken according to the letter, this blessing, as far as it goes, is precisely identical with that of Jacob, v. 28 ; and if that, as we suggested, includes the promise of the land of Canaan, it is perfectly inconceivable how the same earthly inheritance could be prophetically secured to both. For this reason we are strongly inclined to adopt the rendering of some of the Jewish critics, 'Thy dwelling shall be from (i. e. at a distance from) the fatness of the earth,' &c. This is the literal sense of the original, although we know not that the present rendering can be considered as doing any positive violence to the Hebrew idiom. But we think, on the whole, that there is a designed equivocation in the words of the oracle. They were so framed as to be susceptible of the most favorable sense which Esau could draw from them, and yet at the same time, in Isaac's intention, or rather in the mind of the Spirit, legitimately conveyed the meaning attributed to them above. We see not that the phraseology can justly be objected to on this score, for it does not appear that Isaac was under obligation to bestow upon Esau any blessing at all ; and if he uttered one which, as he would naturally understand it, would have the effect to soothe and satisfy his mind, while at the same time in reality it but confirmed the previous blessing of Jacob, and disjoined Esau from all participation in it, who had any right to complain ? The land of Edom, or Mount Seir, which fell to him for a possession, was no doubt sufficiently distinguished for

live, and <sup>l</sup> shalt serve thy brother ; and <sup>m</sup> it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 25. 23. Obad. 18, 19, 20. 2 Sam. 8. 14. <sup>m</sup> 2 Kings 8. 20.

its fertility to warrant the expressions here used, and yet we are assured, from the whole tenor of the Scripture, that that region was not to be compared in this respect with the destined inheritance of Israel.

40. *By thy sword shalt thou live.* Heb. עַל הַרְבֵּקָה *al harbeka*, upon thy sword ; implying not only that his life should be passed in wars and tumults ; that he should be engaged in perpetual hostilities with surrounding nations ; but also that he should procure his subsistence, his living, by this means rather than by the peaceful pursuits of agriculture ; that he should live upon the prey or spoil that he should acquire by his warlike weapons. This, perhaps, confirms the interpretation of the preceding verse ; for if a very rich and fertile country were assigned to him, why was such a roving and freebooting kind of life predicted ? Why should he not draw his subsistence from the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth ?—¶ *Shalt serve thy brother.* This clause, and in fact the whole prophecy, has a more especial reference to the posterity of Esau than to Esau himself ; for Esau in person was never subject to Jacob.—¶ *When thou shalt have dominion.* Heb. תִּרְדֹּךְ *tarid* ; a word of very difficult explication, as it may be derived from three different roots, either (1) רָדָד *radad*, to prostrate, to subject, to bring down ; (2) יָדָד *radah*, to obtain rule, to have dominion ; or (3) רָדָד *rud*, to complain. A very similar form from the last root occurs, Ps 55. 2(3), 'Attend unto me, and hear me I mourn in my complaint (אָרִיד *arid*) and make a noise.' An idea not unsuitable to the context may be, that when Esau, in

41 ¶ And Esau <sup>a</sup> hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau

<sup>a</sup> ch. 37. 4, 8.

his posterity, should have suffered long under the ascendancy of his brother's race, and should be brought penitently to grieve and *complain* by reason of the sore oppression, that then God would interpose by his providence, and enable them to strike the yoke of bondage from their necks; especially if the sins of Israel should provoke him thus to give the advantage to their enemies. Accordingly both the Jerusalem Targum, and that of the Onkelos, render the passage as follows:—'When the sons of Jacob attend to the law, and observe the precepts, they shall impose the yoke of servitude upon thy neck; but when they shall transgress the words of the law, thou shalt break off the yoke of servitude from thy neck.' Syr. 'If thou shalt repent, his yoke shall pass from off thy neck.' This rendering, which is adopted in the version of Junius and Tremellius—*Erit tamen quem planxeris, and it shall be when thou shalt have bevailed thyself*—has at least the merit of harmonizing with what we know to have been the tenor of the divine *dispensations* toward the chosen people. They invariably lost their ascendancy over their enemies in proportion as they sinned against heaven. The proposed interpretation, therefore, we think preferable to any other, especially to that of our translation, which makes the clause a perfect tautology. Would it be possible to gain the dominion without breaking the yoke from their necks? The prediction was not fully accomplished till about nine hundred years after it was uttered. The yoke was not firmly fixed upon them till the time of David, 2 Sam. 8. 14; and at that period the Jewish people observed the law; but the nation having gradually degenerated, Hadad the Edomite, to-

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said in his heart, <sup>o</sup> The days of mourning for my father are at hand, <sup>p</sup> then will I slay my brother Jacob.

<sup>o</sup> ch. 50. 3, 4, 10.

<sup>p</sup> Obad. 10.

wards the end of Solomon's reign, made a vigorous attempt to free himself from the galling subjection, but without success. His failure, however, was not long afterwards retrieved, as in the reign of Joram 'Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.' 2 Kings, 8. 20, 22. Jehoram made some attempts to subdue them again, but could not prevail; 'so the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day.' 2 Chron. 21. 8—10.

41. *And Esau hated Jacob, &c.* Whatever feeling of commiseration or sympathy we may hitherto have cherished for Esau in seeing him supplanted by the subtlety of Jacob, it is all banished from our bosoms when we here behold him inwardly cherishing the most malignant passions, and coolly anticipating the time when he can imbrue his hands in the blood of his brother! His guilt in this assumes an awfully atrocious character. As he was well aware of Isaac's partiality towards himself, he must have been convinced that it was not owing to him, nor to Jacob's fraud, but *to the Lord's doing*, that the actual result had been brought about. Hence it appears that his hatred was of the same nature with that of Cain towards Abel, and of Saul towards David, being directed against him principally on account of his having been a special object of the divine favor. Under these circumstances to attempt to take Jacob's life was virtually waging war with the high purposes of heaven, and an attempt to frustrate the decree of God by a stroke of his sword! The depravity which could have prompted such a bloody resolve in the bosom of a brother and in the family of a patriarch, seems scarcely credible; yet history and observa-

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42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah : and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him,

Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

¶ Ps. 64. 3.

tion both unite to teach us that no bounds can be set to the wickedness of which human nature is capable. The same spirit of hatred seems to have been perpetuated in his posterity against the seed of Jacob. As nothing but the death of Jacob could comfort Esau, so nothing could satisfy his descendants but to see Jerusalem 'razed to its foundations.' Obad. v. 10, 11, &c.—¶ *The days of mourning for my father are at hand.* Heb. יְמֵי אָבֶל אָבִי *yeme abel abi, the days of mourning of my father.* That is, the days in which he shall be bewailed by mourning; the days of mourning on account of my father. The original will also bear another sense, 'The days of my father's mourning shall be at hand,' i. e. the days in which he shall himself be a mourner over his slain son. The former, however, is preferable. 'When the father (or the mother) has become aged, the children say, 'The day of the lamentation of our father is at hand.' 'The sorrowful time for our mother is fast approaching.' If requested to go to another part of the country, the son will ask, 'How can I go? the day of sorrow for my father is fast approaching.' When the aged parents are seriously ill, it is said, 'Ah! the days of mourning have come.'—*Roberts.* Esau, by proposing thus to suppress his resentment till his father were removed beyond the reach of being grieved by its effects, did indeed somewhat consult the feelings of a parent; yet he evidently had no consideration for the grief of his mother. So cruel are even the tender mercies of the wicked.

42. *These words were told to Rebekah, &c.* Esau, it seems, had not only 'said in his heart,' that he would slay his bro-

ther, but that he had in some way actually avowed his intention, perhaps before some of the servants. His purpose, thus divulged, had come to the ears of his mother, and she clearly foresaw what was to be expected. It would be at the hazard of Jacob's life, and consequently of the frustration of the divine counsels concerning him, that he remained any longer under the same roof with his vindictive brother. Immediate precautions must therefore be taken to have him removed out of the way. Thus the unhappy mother begins to reap according as she had sown. The safety of her favorite can only be secured at the price of his banishment. We see from this, that though their imposition succeeded, yet it was a success that embittered the whole life, both of Jacob and his parents. Rebekah, the contriver of the fraud, was deprived of her favorite son, probably for the rest of her days. He, who should have been the stay and the consolation of her declining years, was a stranger in a distant land. Nor did the evil terminate here. Instead of the elder serving the younger, Jacob was now a banished stranger, a wandering fugitive, in continual terror of his enraged brother. The retributive justice of heaven, moreover, is seen pursuing him at every step. First, he who had imposed upon his father, was himself imposed upon by his uncle in the circumstances of his marriage. Next, the continual jealousies and hatred between his wives Leah and Rachel must have reminded him of his own want of fraternal affection. His sin also was visited upon him in his own family: continual feuds prevailed amongst his own children; and he who was most beloved by the father, was most hated by the

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice : and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother <sup>r</sup> to Haran ;

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away ;

45 Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him : then I will send, and fetch thee from

<sup>r</sup> ch. 11. 31.

thence. Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day ?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, <sup>\*</sup> I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth : <sup>t</sup> if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me ?

<sup>\*</sup> ch. 26. 35. & 28. 8. <sup>t</sup> ch. 24. 3.

rest. At length he was himself the dupe of an imposture more successful even than that by which he had deceived his father. Joseph, his beloved son, was sold by his brethren, and stated to be slain. In a word, the rest of the life of Jacob was signalized by scenes of domestic trouble and vexation, which had their origin in the unhappy step we are now considering. At the close of his life he justly said, ' Few and evil have been my days ;' and he might have added, ' I am a melancholy example of the effects of deviating from the path of simplicity and truth.' — ¶ *Esau comforteth himself*, purposing to kill thee. Heb. מִתְנַחֵם לֵךְ לְהָרֶגֶךָ *mithnahem leka le-horgeka*, *comforteth himself over thee, or touching thee, to kill thee*. What a source from whence to draw *comfort* ! How unfathomably deep in depravity must that soul be sunk which can find consolation in such a bloody and barbarous thought as this !

44. *Tarry with him a few days*. This proved eventually to be a period of twenty years, and it is at best doubtful whether Rebekah ever again beheld her son.

45. *Why should I be deprived of you both in one day ?* But why does Rebekah fear a two-fold bereavement ? It is indeed possible that she may have apprehended that a murderous attack from Esau upon his brother might arouse him in self-defence, so that it should be only at the expense of the aggressor's

life that he should lose his own. But a more probable explanation is the following : If Esau had killed Jacob, he would have been liable either to have been punished with death, according to the law, ch. 9. 6 ; or to have been driven into exile like Cain, where he would have been virtually lost to her forever.

46. *I am weary of my life*, &c. It would appear from the circumstances that Rebekah was here framing an excuse for Jacob's departure, and concealing the true cause. Though Isaac was now so infirm as to have lost all power of management, and every thing devolved on Rebekah, yet it was expedient before Jacob's departure, to obtain his father's concurrence. But in order to do this she passes over the true reason of the proposed journey in silence, and knowing that he, as well as herself, had been grieved by Esau's wives, she now pretends to fear that Jacob may form a similar connexion, and makes this the ostensible reason why he should go immediately to Padan-aram, viz. that he might take a wife from among their relations in that country. She does not propose it, however, directly, but merely in the form of a bitter complaint of the conduct of Esau's wives. But this policy completely answered the end, as is clear from the next chapter.

REMARKS. Several of the important reflections suggested by the foregoing narrative, deserve to be dwelt upon a little more in detail.

(1.) *The history furnishes an admonitory lesson to parents.* The foundation of the most material errors in life is often laid at a very early period. Parents are frequently disappointed in their offspring, and troubled in their lives, from a cause which they little suspect. They complain of their children, when, perhaps, the fault is to be traced mainly to themselves. They have indulged an early partiality, founded upon no just reasons, which has been productive on both sides of the worst effects. Let them guard them with anxious vigilance against the symptoms of a weak favoritism toward their children. God has made them equally the guardians of all their children, and they who mismanage so important a trust must expect to suffer for it. A wise providence often points out the sin in the punishment, and teaches parents discretion in the discharge of their duties, by setting before their eyes the bad effects which flow from the want of it.

(2.) *We may learn from this story not to make the supposed designs of God the rule of our conduct.* We say 'supposed designs,' because as to us, they can be only supposed. It may please God to foretel future events, but it is not therefore our duty by crooked means to bring them to pass. God does not give prophecy for a rule of action. He will accomplish his own purposes in his own way. It is happy for us that the course of duty is clearly marked out, in the preceptive portions of the word. We are to follow what is fair, and just, and honorable, and leave the consequences to God.

(3.) *We are reminded that the way to success and to prosperity in our undertakings is often not that which appears the shortest, or even the surest.* Jacob was, indeed, for the time being successful in his fraudulent device. But what fruits had he of his triumph? He sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. Soon was he forced to fly from his brother's wrath,

and years of trouble followed his departure from the paternal mansion. Had he permitted God to accomplish his declaration in his own way; had his conduct to his brother been, as it should have been, kind and affectionate, and free from guile, we cannot doubt that his history would have been far different. His life might then have been as remarkable for happiness and peace as it was for calamity and disquietude. The true source of prosperity is the blessing of God, and this cannot be counted upon, except in strict adherence to the principles of rectitude. A man is exposed to temptation; some great advantage offers itself; a little art or deceit in supplanting another is thought indispensable; excuses are not wanting to justify the act. But what, in general, is the result? Either his arts recoil against himself, and he is utterly disappointed of his aim; or if he apparently succeeds, his success is rather a curse than a blessing. The attainment of his end is more to be deprecated than failure. Our highest wisdom and our surest safety lie in the course of plain, simple, undeviating integrity.

(4.) *We are taught that regret is often unavailing to restore an offender to the privileges of innocence.* Esau, having sold his birthright and lost the blessing, discovered his error too late. The blessing once gone, was gone forever; and tears, and prayers, and exclamations were in vain employed to recover it. Let us learn then, that however momentous the consequences depending upon a single wrong step, *they may be irretrievable.* Regret, however bitter, entreaty, however urgent, may come too late. And even should we escape the doom of final despair, yet our whole lives may be embittered by the recollection of our guilt and folly. In vain shall we look for our former peace of mind, the sweets of conscious innocence, and the fruits of pleasing hope. We may seek for them with tears but they will

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

AND Isaac called Jacob, and <sup>a</sup> blessed him, and <sup>b</sup> charged him, and said unto him, <sup>c</sup> Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

2 <sup>d</sup> Arise, go to <sup>e</sup> Padan-aram,

<sup>a</sup> ch. 27. 33. <sup>b</sup> ch. 24. 3, <sup>c</sup> Hos. 12. 12. <sup>d</sup> ch. 25. 20.

to the house of <sup>f</sup> Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of <sup>g</sup> Laban thy mother's brother.

3 <sup>h</sup> And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

<sup>f</sup> ch. 22. 23. <sup>g</sup> ch. 24. 29. <sup>h</sup> ch. 17. 1, 6.

not be found. Let us not, by yielding to temptation, cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. *Blessed him.* That is, deliberately confirmed and ratified to him the blessing which he had before given him unawares. He had undoubtedly by this time become satisfied that Jacob was the real object of the blessing which he had pronounced, and he now renews it not only intelligently and explicitly, but with all his heart.

2. *Arise, go to Padan-aram.* That is, to Mesopotamia or Syria between the rivers. See Note on Gen. 25. 20. Gr. ἀποβὰς εἰς τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν ἔκτα to Mesopotamia. The precise limits of the country to which the name applies cannot well be ascertained. <sup>a</sup> Properly speaking, it would seem to include all the country between the rivers; but it is only applied to the great plain which extends southward of Mount Masius, which passes between the rivers in the north of this region, and which changes entirely the nature of the country: all that lies to the north-west of this point being mountainous and rugged; while to the south-east a flat and sandy character prevails. From the latter character we must, however, except the extreme south-eastern portion, formerly called Babylonia and Chaldaea, but now Irak Arabi, which possesses a soil naturally rich, the fertility of which was proverbial in remote antiquity, when innu-

merable canals traversed it in all directions, but the interior of which is now destitute of either inhabitants or vegetation. Many parts also of the north-western portion, which is usually distinguished as Mesopotamia Proper, are naturally fertile; but, except near the great rivers which inclose this country, or on the brooks which flow into them, the whole country may be described as a desert—being, in fact, little better than a continuation of the great desert of North Arabia; and equally with it claimed by the Bedouins, who are its sole inhabitants, and who exact the customary tribute from all travellers. One of the most agreeable of the fertile and pleasant tracts by which this desolate region is skirted is the north and north-eastern part, in which Jacob fed the flocks of Laban for so many years; and which contains numerous rich pastures and pleasant hills; although the want of water prevents large portions of naturally fertile soil from being productive. The air is uncommonly pure throughout Mesopotamia: but the sandy deserts, by which the southern portion is environed render the climate there so very warm in summer as to be considered remarkable even by Asiatics, who are accustomed to strong summer heats. <sup>b</sup> *Pict. Bible.*

3. *That thou mayest be a multitude of people.* Heb. לְקַח לְךָ עַמִּים *likhal am-mim*, to a congregation of peoples. Gr. εἰς συναγωγὰς ἐθνῶν, to synagogues of nations. Chal. 'An assembly of tribes;' in allusion, probably, to the twelve

†\*

4 And give thee <sup>b</sup> the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land <sup>i</sup> wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

5 And Isaac sent away Jacob:

<sup>b</sup> ch. 12. 2. <sup>i</sup> ch. 17. 8.

tribes which were to spring from Jacob. The phraseology in the original is remarkable, the term being the same that is applied in several instances to the church of Israel in the wilderness, and conveying under it an ulterior allusion to the Christian church, composed of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. Comp. Gen. 35. 11, Deut. 31. 30, Num. 16. 3, Ex. 16. 3, Acts 7. 38.

4. Give thee the blessing of Abraham. That is, confirm, fulfil, make real to thee the blessing promised to Abraham, one prominent feature of which was the inheritance, by his seed, of the land in which Jacob himself is said to be a stranger and sojourner, though he had been born in it, and thus far bred up in it. —¶ *The land wherein thou art a stranger.* Heb. אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ *eth eretz me-gureka*, the land of thy sojournings. —

¶ Which God gave. Gave by promise; purposed to give. Gen. 12. 7,—13. 15,—15. 7, 18,—17. 8.

5. Bethuel the Syrian, Heb. בְּתוּלִי *haarammi*, the Aramite, or Aramean; so called, not because he was of the race of Aram, the son of Shem, but because he dwelt in that country which had formerly been possessed by the descendants of Aram. See Note on Gen. 25. 20.

6. When Esau saw, &c. That is, took cognizance of the fact; attentively considered it. The incidents here recorded in respect to Esau are very remarkable. Finding Jacob now dismissed, and himself left alone under the paternal roof, he begins to think of taking advantage of circumstances, and endeavoring, if possible, to recover what he had so foolishly lost. To this end he knows he must first of all concil-

iate his father. It was only by ingratiating himself afresh into his favor that he could hope to induce him to revoke the blessing conferred upon Jacob, and bestow it upon himself. His great study, therefore, now is, to please his father, to work effectually upon his parental fondness. He accordingly enters with feigned repentance upon a partial reformation. Knowing that his parents were both grieved by his marriage with the Hittite women, and perceiving, from the charge given to Jacob and the ready obedience he had yielded to it, that it was on this point that the patriarch was most accessible, he seems to have said to himself, 'If that will please him, I will take another wife; and as he thinks so much of his kindred, it shall be from among them. Moreover, as Jacob, who is his mother's favorite, intends to marry into her family, I, who am my father's, will marry into his.' Such a measure, he seems to have little doubt, he could pass off upon his father as a noble act of filial duty, as a grand sacrifice of inclination to conscience. But in all this we see the awkward and wayward manœuvring of a self-interested hypocrite. In the first place he stood in no need of a wife, for he had two already; and if he had sincerely aimed to gratify his parents, he would rather have put away these than have taken a third in addition to them. In fact, in pretending to avoid one sin he falls into another; and so it often happens to those whose hearts are not right with God. From not guiding their footsteps by his word, their very efforts towards amendment plunge them deeper into difficulty. Because it was

6 ¶ When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he

blessed him, he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife, of the daughters of Canaan;

7 And that Jacob obeyed his fa-

ill done of Esau to take wives of the daughters of Canaan, it did not follow that it would be doing well to add to the number by taking another from a different stock. It is well to refrain from any thing which we know to be displeasing to God; but it is making bad worse, if, in our projected amendment, we follow the desires and devices of our own hearts without consulting his will. Yet such was Esau's conduct on this occasion; and not only so, but, secondly, he goes to a family which had become, in the righteous providence of God, alienated, if not outlawed, from the pale of the covenant, and which at this time had in all probability greatly apostatized from the true faith and the true worship. Thirdly, the extreme faultiness of his conduct appears in this, that he consulted the feelings of his *father* only, regardless of those of his *mother*. As his father had it in his power to favor him in a way in which his mother could not, his sole aim was to work upon his partialities without any reference to *hers*. Finally, that he had no sincere and ingenuous sorrow for the past is clear from the fact that he still retained his hatred against his brother. He was even now laying snares for his feet, and 'hunting for his precious life.' This of itself was enough to give the lie to all his pretensions. True repentance would have softened down the malignant feelings which he cherished, and though he might not have been reinstated in the blessings and prerogatives which he had lost, yet he would have acknowledged the hand of an overruling providence in what had occurred, and esteemed it a mercy to hold even a second place in a line so honored and favored as that of Abraham. The conduct of Esau throughout this transaction affords

ther, and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;

8 And Esau seeing <sup>†</sup> that the

<sup>†</sup> ch. 24. 3. & 26. 35.

abundant matter of reflection and improvement. What a striking type do we behold in it of the mercenary and one-sided religion of great multitudes of men! They would fain secure the favor of God and the advantages of piety, while at the same time they are at the farthest remove from having respect to *all* God's commandments; and their hearts are replete with unkind, unfilial, unfraternal, envious, and vindictive feelings toward their fellow-men. Many will go far in the outward practice of piety, provided there may be a privileged exemption on the score of some particular sin. They will put away some offences, if only there may be a reservation of others. But of what avail can be any religious professions or doings when marred by such glaring incongruities and inconsistencies as these? We can see at a glance how groundless would be any one's pretensions to the spirit of the gospel who should allow his enmity to rise to the murderous height of that of Esau. But let us not forget that there are lower degrees of malice which are as really decisive against our claims to Christian character, and put an inseparable obstacle in the way of our obtaining the light of God's countenance. A cherished pique, a latent grudge against a brother or a sister, is not only destructive of the peace of our own minds, but conclusive evidence that the meek and merciful spirit of Christ is not in us. Of what nature must be that so-called religion, which does not avail to quench the unholy fires of passion, and melt away all our little feuds and animosities in the stronger, the sacred fervors of that love which is born of God?

8. *Pleased not Isaac.* Heb. רעות

רוח בעיני יצחק *ruoth beanai yitzhak*, [were]



daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father ;

9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had <sup>1</sup> Mahalath, the daughter of Ish-

<sup>1</sup> ch. 36. 3.

*evil in the eyes of Isaac* ; i. e. displeasing, disagreeable, offensive : as, on the contrary, *good in the eyes of* is equivalent to pleasing, grateful, acceptable. Gen. 16. 6.

9. *Then went Esau unto Ishmael.* That is, to his family, for Ishmael himself, it would seem, was now dead. Gen. 25. 17.—<sup>†</sup> *Mahalath*, called *Bashemath*, ch. 36. 3.

10. *Jacob went out from Beersheba, &c.* The circumstances of Jacob's departure from his father's house, formed a striking contrast with the pompous mission which had been sent to the same country when a wife was to be procured for Isaac. Without a servant to attend him, or a beast to carry him, or any other accommodation, except, as he afterwards informs us, Gen. 32. 10, 'a staff' to walk with, he pursues his solitary way. The reason of this, though not expressly assigned, is perhaps to be referred to the hatred of Esau. Jacob may have stolen away secretly, and without any retinue, and have shunned the frequented path to Padan-Aram, in order to elude the vigilance and resentment of his brother, who, he had grounds to fear, would pursue him to take his life. But however this may have been, his reflections on the occasion must have been pungent in the extreme. Great as we may suppose his comfort to have been in receiving his father's pardon and blessing, and rich as were the promises embraced in this paternal benediction, yet it was doubtless with many a bitter pang that he prosecuted his journey. His sin has found him out. He cannot but feel that he has been himself the architect of his present lonely, destitute, and perilous

mael, Abraham's son, = the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

10 <sup>†</sup> And Jacob <sup>n</sup> went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward <sup>o</sup> Haran.

= ch. 25. 13.    <sup>n</sup> Hos. 12. 12.    <sup>o</sup> Acts 7. 2.

condition. Had it not been for his criminal impatience, and the sinful stratagem to which it led, he would not, probably, have excited his brother's hatred, or subjected himself to exile from the home of his childhood. But we here behold the heir of promise, the chosen servant of God, in whose loins were an elect people and many powerful kings, whose history was to occupy so large a space in the book of God, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, a forlorn wanderer, banished from his father's house, his whole inheritance his staff in his hand ! We see him going forth, an alien and a fugitive from that very country, his anxiety to obtain which had formed one motive of his late duplicity ! But the lesson which is taught by the patriarch's lot is full of instruction. We cannot but read in it a stern rebuke of that sinister proceeding to which it was owing. Nor can we doubt that the train of thought that now passed through Jacob's mind was of a gloomy and distressful character. Oppressed with a desolating sense of his loneliness, and inwardly pained with the compunctious visitings of his faithful conscience, he must often have asked himself, on his dreary route, 'Why am I here ?'—a question to which the recollection of his sin would furnish a ready answer. The secret doubt whether he were indeed the object of the pardoning love and the special guidance of the Most High, must have occasioned him many a bitter pang while the shades of the first evening were closing around him ; but the sequel informs us that, in the midst of this scene of outer and inner darkness, God was graciously prepar-

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them* for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

ing a message of peace and joy for his exiled servant. —¶ *Went toward Haran.* Which is computed to have been at least four hundred and fifty miles distant from Beer-sheba. The route thither was through a country in many places desert and savage, and in others no less dangerous from the hostile tribes that dwelt in it or ranged through it. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that Jacob at this time, instead of being a hale young man, in the prime of life, had attained the age of seventy-seven years.

11. *He lighted upon a certain place.* Heb. יִפְגַּע *yiphga*, *chanced to meet with*, implying that his being overtaken by nightfall in that particular place, and tarrying there all night, was in consequence of a providential ordering, rather than of his own purpose. Thus, Eccl. 9. 11, 'Time and *chance* (פֶּגַע *pega*) happeneth to them all;' where the noun doubtless has the import of something at once *unexpected, unforeseen*, and yet *providential*. The doctrine of *chance, fortune, or blind fate*, did not enter into the theology of the Hebrews. This place was eight miles north of Jerusalem and forty-eight from Beer-sheba. Jacob probably intended to reach the city before sunset, but being delayed beyond his expectations, and finding the gates shut upon his arrival, he was under the necessity, it seems, of lodging in the open field in the suburbs. Even at the present day it frequently happens in the eastern countries, that travellers not reaching the city previous to the shutting of the gates, are compelled to abide under the walls all night; as, when once shut, they refuse to open them till next day.

12 And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

¶ ch. 41. 1. Job. 33. 15. ¶ John 1. 51. Hebr. 1. 14.

But sleeping in the open air is a custom very common in the East, and from the temperature of the climate much less dangerous than in colder latitudes. —¶ *Put them for his pillows.* Heb. מֵרָאשָׁתָּו *meraashothav*. This word, derived from ראש *rosh*, *head*, properly signifies *head-bolster*, or *what is at the head of any one*, and stands opposed to מַרְגְּלוֹת *margeloth*, from רֶגֶל *regel*, *foot*, signifying any thing placed at the feet. It occurs also 1 Sam. 26. 7, 'And behold Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster (מֵרָאשָׁתָּו).' —¶ *And lay down in that place to sleep.* Heb. יִשְׁכַּב *yishkab*, strictly implying nothing more than *simply to lie down*, without necessarily involving the idea of sleeping. The words 'to sleep,' added at the close of the verse by our translators, are purely supplemental, and ought, no doubt, to have been printed in Italics.

12. *And he dreamed, &c.* The sovereign manner in which the Most High dispenses his favors is here strikingly illustrated. Jacob had been guilty of a high-handed offence in personating his brother, and imposing on his father, and thus fraudulently obtaining the blessing. In consequence, he was now fleeing to avoid the effects of his brother's indignation. And in what manner should we suppose that God would meet him, if indeed he should deign to notice such an offender at all? Would he not say to him, as he afterwards did to the fugitive prophet, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' Or rather, would he not meet him in a way of judgment, as he did Moses on the way to Egypt, Ex. 4. 24—28, and painfully dictate to him

his sore displeasure? But behold, in order to display the riches of his grace, he reveals himself to him in a most instructive vision. He confirms to him all the promises previously made to Abraham and to Isaac, and extends the manifestations of his favor beyond all former bounds! Well may he exclaim with David, 'Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?' — ¶ *And behold, a ladder.* Heb. סֻלָּם *sullam*. Gr. κλίμαξ. It is extremely doubtful whether the real object seen in Jacob's vision was an ordinary 'ladder.' We are not satisfied that this rendering yields the genuine sense of the original. It is certainly very incongruous in point of imagery to conceive of a ladder with its base standing upon the earth, while its top had nothing solid to lean against. As to its top reaching to heaven, this implies its great height, but properly conveys no intimation of any support afforded to its upper extremity. The Heb. term, which occurs only here, is a derivative from סָלַל *salal*, to raise up in a pile, to exalt by casting or heaping up, as in the construction of a mound or highway. In this sense, from which there is no important deviation throughout the Scriptures, the verb occurs, Is. 57. 14, 'Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way.' Is. 62. 10, 'Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up, the highway.' Jer. 50. 26, 'Come against her from the utmost border, cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly.' With these passages, therefore, as a clew, we take the term to mean, instead of 'a ladder,' in the common acceptance, a *towering elevation, as of several mountains cast up and heaped together in one, with broken irregular sides, composed of ledges of rocks serving as steps or stairs by which it might be ascended to the top*. The reason of its being rendered 'ladder' in the Gr. of the Sept., which most modern versions, and our own among the rest, have adopted, may have been, that high

mountains which are ascended in this manner by jutting prominences on their sides, (called in the Spanish language 'ladderías,' with which compare the Eng. phrase 'to scale a height,') were sometimes termed 'ladders.' Thus Josephus, J. W. b. ii. c. 10, speaking of the situation of Ptolemais, says, 'It was bounded on the north by a mountain called the *Ladder of the Tyrians*.' Analogous to this, 'the stairs that go down from the city of David,' in Jerusalem, are rendered κλίμακας *ladders*, Neh. 3. 15, and 12. 36, though they were in reality nothing else than stone steps excavated from the side of the hill. In the vision of the patriarch, the angels of God, we suppose, were seen ascending and descending the declivities of this *heaped-up mountain*, while the divine Glory, in visible apparition, rested upon its summit. Though the dream was undoubtedly supernatural, yet it is not unlikely that the object presented in this vision was suggested by the previous circumstance of Jacob's rudely heaping together his pillow of stones, and that the little pile on which his head rested was the miniature model of the object which God spread before his imagination in his sleep. The interpretation given of this visionary mountain-pile by the Jewish commentators is the following: 'The ladder, which Jacob our father saw, was a parable of the monarchies;' i. e. of the series of great monarchies and kingdoms forming the subject of the predictions of Daniel. Of these, *mountains*, in the figurative language of Scripture, is a standing symbol, and the overthrow of a kingdom is thus described in the prophetic style: Jer. 51. 25, 'Behold I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt (or, Heb. 'a burning') mountain.' Closely connected with this, and of a parallel im-

13 <sup>r</sup> And behold the LORD stood above it, and said I am the LORD

<sup>r</sup> ch. 35. 1. & 48. 3.      <sup>r</sup> ch. 26. 24.

port, is the following passage from the Apocalypse, ch. 8 8, 'And as it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood.' A similar diction prevails throughout the prophets. We are inclined to think, therefore, that there is some ground for this interpretation, so far at least as to warrant us in understanding the scenery of the vision as *foreshadowing some future kingdoms or kingdom destined to arise and hold a conspicuous place on the earth*. That it has in some way a reference to gospel times and events is clear from our Saviour's allusion to it, John, 1. 51, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man;' that is, ye shall one day see that realized in regard to me which was *shadowed forth* in Jacob's vision. But that the ladder, as it is termed, was a type of Christ in his divine and human nature, mediating between heaven and earth, is, in our opinion, an entirely fanciful and unwarranted mode of interpreting the vision. It will perhaps be sufficient to say, that the Saviour's words will be fulfilled at the period to which we have referred, when his kingdom shall have become fully established on earth. It is not unlikely that the communication between heaven and earth by means of angels will then be much more complete than it has ever yet been. But, though the above may have been its *ultimate* scope, yet we cannot well doubt that its more immediate object was of a simpler character, and one more especially adapted to the circumstances of Jacob at the time. He had now left his father's house solitary and sorrowful, with much to fear and little to hope. He had, indeed, received the paternal blessing, but he had irritated his injured brother, and

God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: 'the land whereon'  
<sup>r</sup> ch. 13. 5. & 35. 12.

under the reproofs of his own conscience he could not but be a prey to the most disquieting apprehensions. Under these circumstances, what could dispel his fears and allay the inward tumult of his mind, but the firm persuasion of an overruling providence, of a real though invisible communication between heaven and earth? This, then, we may suppose to have been the *proximate* design of the vision. God would teach him, by its significant imagery, the consoling truth, that there was a constant intercourse kept up, through the medium of angelic ministers, between the visible and invisible world; that although he was now an exile from his native land, and traversing alone uninhabited deserts; that though he was in danger from the wild beasts that roamed abroad at night, and from the lawless tribes that prowled for spoil through the day, yet he was encompassed by the presence and protection of his Maker, whose angels pitched their camps about his bed, and under the shadow of whose wings he might rest. To all this nothing could be better adapted than the vision of the towering mountain-height and the ascending and descending angels, now vouchsafed to him. At the same time we know of nothing to forbid the supposition that an ulterior and deeper meaning was couched under this symbol, of which it was not necessary that Jacob himself should be aware. He learned enough from it to answer his present purposes; enough to inspire him with confidence, and fill him with comfort; and if we with the aid of subsequent revelations and a superior insight into the symbolic language of the Scriptures, can elicit from it a greater fulness and richness of import, what should prevent us from so doing?

13. Behold the Lord stood above it. Heb  
עליו הנה יהוה הנה *hinneh Jehovah nitz-*

thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.

14 And <sup>u</sup>thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad <sup>w</sup>to the west,

<sup>u</sup> ch. 13. 16. <sup>w</sup> ch. 13. 14. Deut. 12. 20.

*tzab alav, behold Jehovah standing upon it or above it.* Gr. ὁ Κύριος ἐπεστηρικ-  
το ἐπ' αὐτὸν, *the Lord was firmly fixed, grounded, or established upon it.* Chal. 'And the glory of the Lord was fixed, (מַעֲטָד) *meattad, constituta.*—Buxtorf) upon or over it.' The original word נָצַב for 'stood,' (or 'standing,') is from the same root with that rendered 'set,' (נָצַב) *mutzab.* Gr. ἐστηρικμένῃ *firmly fixed*, in the succeeding clause, and is used for the most part to signify, not an active stationing or placing one's self, but passively, a being firmly fixed, settled, established, usually spoken of pillars, statues, columns, and other abiding fixtures, and less properly applied to a personal agent, except in the sense of being constituted, or appointed to office, made to preside over, as 1 Sam. 19. 20. 'And when they saw Samuel standing as appointed (נָצַב) over them;' where the terms for 'standing,' and 'appointed,' are entirely different. 1 Sam. 22. 9, 'Doeg, which was set over (נָצַב) the servants of Saul.' Ruth 2. 5, 'Said unto his servant that was set over (נָצַב) the reapers.' The phraseology, therefore, legitimately points to a visible object, which was capable of being firmly fixed and established on the summit of the visionary pile. And as the title 'Jehovah' is applied to this object, we cannot but conclude that it was the Shekinah, the usual visible symbol, not so much of the divine nature in the abstract, as of the future manifested Deity in the person, glory, and kingdom of the Messiah. We suppose, then, that this part of the vision distinctly imported that the future kingdom of Christ was destined finally to rise superior to the glory of all worldly kingdoms, and to be established above

and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and <sup>x</sup>in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

<sup>x</sup> ch. 12. 3. & 18. 18. & 22. 18. & 26. 4.

them. This fact the prophet Isaiah announces in terms strikingly corroborative of our present interpretation. Is. 2. 2, 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.' In this view of the subject we not only perceive a sufficient reason for the use of the extraordinary term נָצַב, implying at once establishment and pre-eminence, or presidency, but are also enabled to see more distinctly, we believe, than on any other interpretation, the grand scope of the whole vision, and particularly of the Divine address made to Jacob in connexion with the imaginary scenery before him. It was, if we mistake not, to assure him that his final lot, in the multiplication and enlargement of his seed, should be as much superior to his present humble state, as the immense mountain-pile seen in his vision exceeded the little heap of stones thrown together for his pillow. Of this assurance Jacob afterwards records himself a partial fulfilment; Gen. 32. 10, 'For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.'

14. *As the dust of the earth.* This prediction makes very striking the apostrophe of Balaam, Num. 23, 'Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?—¶ Thou shalt spread abroad, &c. Heb. פָּרַצְתָּ *paratzta, shall break forth*, like waters, on every side. The assurance here given to Jacob, respecting the future increase of his seed, while it renews and confirms the blessings before announced to Abraham, falls in, at the

15 And behold <sup>r</sup> I *am* with thee, and will <sup>a</sup> keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will <sup>a</sup> bring thee again into this land: for <sup>b</sup> I will not leave thee, <sup>c</sup> until I have

<sup>r</sup> ver. 20, 21. ch. 26. 24. & 31. 3. \* ch. 48. 16. Ps. 121. 5, 7, 8. \* ch. 35. 6. <sup>b</sup> Deut. 28. 6. Josh. 1. 5. 1 Kings 8. 57. Heb. 13. 5. <sup>c</sup> Numb. 23. 19.

same time with what we have said of the symbolic drift of the vision. What the huge mountain mass was to the little heap of stones at his head, that should the countless multitude of the patriarch's chosen seed be to himself personally.

15. *Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee, &c.* The Gr. of the Sept. gives this part of the promise in a more restricted sense,—*ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ παρὰ, in all the way, or in all this way*, i. e. I will direct, help, and support thee in a peculiar manner in thy present journey. But the words have probably a more extensive reach of meaning, pledging the divine presence and protection in *all* the journeys he might undertake. The promises now vouchsafed to Jacob are of two kinds; the former being a repetition and ratification of those before made to Abraham and Isaac, relating rather to his posterity than to himself; while the latter had a more distinct reference to Jacob personally, and to the circumstances of his present distress. It is to Jacob, *individually*, that God more especially speaks in the verse before us. Though now wandering forth alone, and not knowing to what dangers and temptations he might be exposed in the country to which he is going, or whether he should ever return again in safety, yet the Lord assures him that, however he might be an alien from his father's house, he should not be cast away from *his* presence, and that he would be his guide and guardian *wherever* he should go. Why should we not, as the spiritual seed of Jacob, catch a gleam of re-

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done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

16 ¶ And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in <sup>d</sup> this place; and I knew *it* not.

<sup>d</sup> Exod. 3, 5. Josh. 5. 15.

freshing light from this assurance as we pass along? If God will be with us; if he will keep us in all places and circumstances; if he will never leave us nor forsake us; and if he will bring us at last to our promised and hoped-for land of rest, then may we go on our way with confidence and joy. Whoever we may leave, or whatever we may lose, still we part not from our best friend, nor are we deprived of our most valuable portion. We cannot be lonely, if God be with us. We cannot want, if he provide for us. We cannot err, if he guide us. We cannot perish, if he preserve us. And all this he *will* do for those that put their trust in him.

16. *Surely the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not.* Chal. 'In very deed the glory of the Lord dwelleth in this place.' Arab. 'The light of God is in this place.' As might have been expected, the dream produced a powerful impression upon the mind of Jacob. His feelings upon awaking were those of grateful wonder mingled with emotions of reverential awe, bordering close upon dread. He who had felt no fear in laying himself down to sleep in a lonely place, and under the cloud of night, is now filled with holy dismay when the morning arose, at the thought of being surrounded with God. But the element of joy was not extinguished by the feeling of the awful which the scene had inspired. The drift of his exclamation was, that the Lord had been especially present to him where he little thought of meeting with him. He had laid him down to sleep, as on com-

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in

mon ground, but he found that it was a consecrated place, hallowed by the presence of God himself in this blessed vision of the night. It seemed a lone and uninviting spot, but it had proved to him a magnificent temple. He had seen in it a glorious appearance of God, with his attendant retinue; and the gates of heaven itself had, as it were, been opened to his view. Such a visitation was too precious not to be especially commemorated, and this, accordingly, was his immediate care.

18. *Took the stone—and set it up for a pillar.* Heb. מַצֵּבָה *matzebah*, a fixed, standing pillar. The original term is rendered, Lev. 26. 1, a 'standing image'; and it is elsewhere rendered in like manner, either 'image,' or 'statue;' but the Gr. has στῆλη *pillar*, and it is properly used for those sacred, memorial, or representative pillars, which were afterwards forbidden to the Israelites, probably on account of the too common idolatrous abuse of them. Lev. 26. 1. Deut. 16. 22. When Jacob is said to have taken the 'stone' upon which his head had lain, and set it up for this purpose, we are probably to understand the word as a collect. sing. for 'stones;' as it appears obvious from v. 11, that there was more than one of them—¶ And poured oil upon the top of it. This was to Jacob not only a night much to be remembered, but a place much to be honored. He therefore resolves to fix upon the spot a solemn memorial of the Lord's appearance to him there. From the little cruse, which had no doubt formed a part of his slender stock of provision for his journey, he pours oil upon the pillar to consecrate the place. Things and persons anointed with oil were re-

garded as set apart to the service of God, to a holy and sacred use. Thus the tabernacle and its vessels were anointed, Ex 40. 9—11. In like manner kings and priests, when inaugurated into office, passed through the same ceremony, 1 Sam. 10. 1. And thus Jacob renders the present place henceforth holy, at least in his own estimation, and gives it a name of corresponding import. The practice of erecting pillars as memorials of events is coeval with the earliest history of nations. Where men are ignorant of the art of writing, a durable monument of this kind, which is associated with the story of some remarkable fact, will long preserve that story in recollection. After the art of writing was introduced among the nations of antiquity, we find that they still continued to erect these pillars, but availing themselves of that invention, they sculptured the history deeply in the stone, that in this enduring form it might become the possession 'of nations yet to be.' Every reader has heard of the pillars or obelisks of Egypt and Nubia. We learn from Eusebius and other authors, that it was very common, in early times, to rear pillars of stone, to anoint them with oil and then perform religious rites around or over them. To these pillars the Greeks gave the name 'Baitulia,' an evident derivative from 'Bethel,' the place of their origin. (See Le Clerc on Gen. 28. 18.) From the same source undoubtedly originated the worship of the 'Black Stone,' among the followers of Mohammed, which is still preserved at Mecca, in the temple of the Caaba, otherwise denominated 'Beit-allah,' house of God, a term which also clearly betrays its etymological relation to 'Bethel.' 'Nothing can

\* ch. 31. 13, 45. & 35. 14. † Lev. 8. 10, 11, 12. Numb. 7. 1.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first.

‡ Judg. 1. 23. 26. Hos. 4. 15.

be more natural than this act of Jacob, for the purpose of marking the site and making a memorial of an occurrence of such great interest and importance to him (see Note on chap. 35. 20.) The true design of this humble monument seems to have been, however, to set this anointed pillar as an evidence of the solemn vow which he made on that occasion. This use of a stone, or stones, is definitely expressed in chap. 31. 48 and 52. Mr. Morier, in his 'Second Journey through Persia,' notices a custom which seems to illustrate this act of Jacob. In travelling through Persia, he observed that the guide occasionally placed a stone on a conspicuous piece of rock, or two stones one upon another, at the same time uttering some words which were understood to be a prayer for the safe return of the party. This explained to Mr. Morier what he had frequently observed before in the East, and particularly on high roads leading to great towns, at a point where the towns are first seen, and where the oriental traveller sets up his stone, accompanied by a devout exclamation in token of his safe arrival. Mr. Morier adds: 'Nothing is so natural, in a journey over a dreary country, as for a solitary traveller to set himself down fatigued, and to make the vow that Jacob did: 'If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I may reach my father's house in peace,' &c., then will I give so much in charity; or, again, that on first seeing the place which he has so long toiled to reach, the traveller should sit down and make a thanksgiving, in both cases setting up a stone as a memorial.' The writer of this note has himself often observed such stones without being aware of their object, until happening one day to overturn one

that had been set upon another, a man hastened to replace it, at the same time informing him that to displace such stones was an act unfortunate for the person so displacing it, and unpleasant to others. The writer afterwards observed, that the natives studiously avoided displacing any of these stones, 'set up for a pillar,' by the way-side. The place now pointed out as Bethel contains no indication of Jacob's pillar. The Jews believe that it was placed in the sanctuary of the second temple, and that the ark of the covenant rested upon it; and they add, that after the destruction of that temple, and the desolation of Judea, their fathers were accustomed to lament the calamities that had befallen them over the stone on which Jacob's head rested at Bethel. The Mohammedans are persuaded that their famous temple at Mecca is built over the same stone.' *Pict. Bible.*

19. *But the name of that city was called Luz at the first.* It does not follow from this that there was any city in this place *at this time*. It is quite clear from the preceding narrative that Jacob had slept in the open field at some distance from any house. But there may have been a city in the vicinity which was originally called 'Luz,' and which afterwards, in consequence of the event here mentioned happening in its neighborhood, may have received the name of 'Beth-el.' Or we may take what is perhaps the still more plausible solution of Calvin, who thinks there was no city whatever on the spot or in the vicinity at the time, but that afterwards one was built there by the Canaanites, and called 'Luz' from the abundance of *almond trees* which grew there, without any regard to Jacob's appellation; but that in subsequent ages, when the children of Israel obtained possession of



20 <sup>h</sup> And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If <sup>i</sup> God will be with me, and

<sup>h</sup> ch. 31. 13. Judg. 11. 30. 2 Sam. 15. 18.  
<sup>i</sup> ver. 15.

will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me <sup>k</sup> bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. 6. 8.

the country, and of this city among others, they restored, from motives of reverence, the ancient name which the patriarch had bestowed upon it. That the place was long regarded with religious veneration we may infer from Jeroboam's having chosen it for the seat of his idolatrous worship of the golden calves, 1 Kings, 12. 28, 29, for which reason the prophet Hosea, ch. 4. 15, alluding to the name given it by Jacob, calls it 'Beth-aven,' *the house of vanity*, i. e. of idols, instead of 'Beth-el,' *house of God*. In like manner Amos, 5. 5, 'Bethel shall come to nought (Heb. יְרִיחוֹ יִרְדּוּ shall be Aven.)' A good name has no security of permanence where a change for the worse has taken place in the character. God even writes upon his own people, 'Lo-Ammi,' *not my people* instead of 'Ammi,' *my people*, when, by their transgression, they forfeit his favor.

20. *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, &c.* Not satisfied with merely erecting and anointing the memorial-pillar, Jacob gives way still further to the promptings of a grateful heart, and binds himself by the solemnity of a vow to be more fully the Lord's than he had ever been before. It is not to be understood, however, from his conditional mode of expression, '*If God will be with me,*' &c. that he had any doubt as to the fulfilment of the divine promise, or that he would prescribe terms to his Maker. The language implies nothing more than his cordially taking God at his word; his laying hold of his gracious assurances; and a sincere avowal, that since the Lord had kindly promised him the bestowment of inestimable blessings, he would endeavor not to be wanting in the suitable returns of duty and devotedness. God had promised to be

with him, to keep him, to bring him again into the land, and not to leave him. He takes up the precious words, and virtually says, 'Oh, let it be according to thy word unto thy servant, and thou shalt be mine, and I will be thine, forever.' This was all right; for Jacob sought nothing which God had not promised, and he could not well err while making the divine promises the rule and measure of his desires. Our vows are wrong when either we hope that by them we can induce God to do for us what otherwise he has not engaged or is unwilling to perform; or when we imagine that the services which we stipulate to render to him will be any compensation for the mercies vouchsafed. Vows are not intended to have the force of a bargain or compact by which to involve the Deity in obligations of any kind; but merely to bind ourselves to the performance of something which was before indifferent, or to impress our minds more strongly with the necessity of executing some acknowledged duty. From the connexion and circumstances, it is clear that Jacob's vow was one of the most unexceptionable character, and such as God approved. 'The order of what he desired is deserving of notice. It corresponds with our Saviour's rule, to seek things of the greatest importance first. By how much God's favor is better than life, by so much his *being with us*, and *keeping us*, is better than food and raiment.' Fuller. — ¶ *Will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on.* It is impossible not to be struck with the moderation of Jacob's desires, as evinced in these words. He speaks like one who is firmly persuaded that if God be with us, and keep us, the mere necessities of life will make us happy. He

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace : <sup>m</sup> then shall the LORD be my God :

22 And this stone, which I have

<sup>1</sup> Judg. 11. 31. 2 Sam. 19. 24, 30.  
<sup>m</sup> Deut. 26. 17. 2 Sam. 15. 8. 2 Kings 5. 17.

seeks not high things for himself. He asks not for wealth or equipage, for rank or renown. The means of a bare subsistence, a simple competency, bounds the narrow circle of his wishes, as far as worldly good is concerned ; and where this spirit exists, we know from the case of Solomon, 1 Kings, 3. 5—12, that God is wont to grant not only the favors requested, but vastly more. Thus it was with Jacob, and thus we shall doubtless find it with ourselves.

21. *Then shall the Lord be my God.* That is, I will utterly renounce and forsake all the idolatries and superstitions of the surrounding heathen ; I will acknowledge, worship, and cleave to Jehovah alone, having no other God before him, and serving him in my own person and in my family faithfully and reverently all the days of my life. It should not, however, be withheld from the reader, that Geddes, Rosenmuller, and many other critics of note, consider this clause as one of the *conditions*, and not of the *consequences*, of the vow. They accordingly render 'If God will be with me, &c., and if the Lord will be a God to me ;' i. e. according to the promise made to Abraham, Gen. 17. 7, to be a God to him and to his seed. The original will undoubtedly admit of this rendering as naturally as of the other, and it is perhaps equally probable. In this sense it seems to have been understood by all the ancient translators, except the Syr., Vulg., and Pers., who took the prefix רָחֵם (*vehayah*) in the sense of *tum, then*, and like the Eng. version, make it a part of Jacob's stipulation to God. But Michaelis rejects this, and adopts the former construction.

22. *This stone—shall be God's house.*

set for a pillar, <sup>n</sup> shall be God's house : <sup>o</sup> and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tent<sup>n</sup> unto thee.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 35. 7, 14. <sup>o</sup> Lev. 27. 30.

That is, shall stand for, shall represent, shall signify ; for which the Hebrew has no other term than the *verb of existence*. See Note on Gen. 40. 12. It does not appear that he intended to erect a structure in this place for the permanent worship of God, which should be called 'the house of God,' or that his words, rightly understood, announce any such purpose. We rather take the drift of the clause to be, that he should ever regard the place as peculiarly sacred, a spot honored and hallowed by an extraordinary manifestation of the divine presence ; and, prompted by that feeling, he would leave there a monument which should not only be a memento of the mercies so signally vouchsafed him, but also a shadow, a symbol, a prefiguration of that *future* structure which in process of time God would cause to be erected within the bounds of the promised land, and which should itself be but a type of that final spiritual mystical house, *the church*, composed of *living stones*, and forming the body of his spiritual seed. It may, indeed, be doubted whether Jacob himself understood the *full* import of the words he now uttered. The true exposition, if we mistake not, is to be read in a passage of the New Testament, where Paul appears to be guided by the Holy Ghost to the right explication of the patriarch's language. 1 Tim. 3. 15, 'That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.' The phrase 'house of God' seems to have suggested to the Apostle its Heb. designation, 'Bethel,' and this again, by a natural association, the memorial pillar there erected by Jacob, the spirit

## CHAP. XXIX.

**T**HEN Jacob went on his journey, <sup>a</sup> and came into the land of the people of the east.

<sup>a</sup> Numb. 23. 7. Hos. 12. 12.

ual import of which he pronounces to be to represent 'the church of the living God,' a declaration properly based upon Jacob's words, v. 22, 'And this stone shall be God's house.' The expression 'pillar and ground of the truth,' is probably a Hebraism, equivalent to 'the *true* pillar and ground;' i. e. the church is the reality, the truth, the substance, of which Jacob's pillar was the shadow. The terms *true* and *truth* are clearly applied in this sense in the New Testament. Thus, John, 1. 17, 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ.' Now, as it is certain that *truth*, in its ordinary acceptance, came as really, though not to the same degree, by Moses as by Christ, we are forced to understand this of the *substance* of the gospel as contradistinguished from the *shadows* of the law. By Moses came the *letter* and the *type*, by Christ came the *spirit*, the *reality*, the *substance*, or, in a word, the *truth*. So here we take the apostle's meaning to be, that the *church* was the *true*, the *real*, the *substantial* pillar and ground (*σῶμα*, *supporting base*) which Jacob erected, anointed, and named at Bethel. If so, we can hardly doubt that the Holy Spirit had a scope in the transaction far beyond what entered into the thoughts of Jacob. — ¶ *I will surely give the tenth unto thee.* From which it is clear that tithes were paid and set apart for religious uses before the giving of the law of Moses. To whom they were paid, or to what particular purpose applied, in this case, does not appear; but it seems very probable that Jacob intended to lay an obligation upon his posterity to reserve a tenth of the fruits of their labor for the maintenance of religious institutions.

2 And he looked, and behold, a well in the field, and lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered

## CHAP. XXIX.

'Isaac's life was not more retired and quiet than Jacob's was busy and troublesome: in the one I see the image of contemplation, of action in the other. None of the patriarchs saw so evil days as he, from whom justly hath the church of God therefore taken her name: neither were the faithful ever since called Abrahamites, but Israelites. That no time might be lost, he began his strife in the womb; after that, he flies for his life from a cruel brother to a cruel uncle. With a staff he goes over Jordan alone, doubtful and comfortless, not like the son of Isaac: in the way the earth is his bed, and the stone his pillow; yet even there he sees a vision of angels. Jacob's heart was never so full of joy as when his head lay hardest. God is most present with us in our greatest dejection, and loves to give comfort to those that are forsaken of their hopes.' *Bp. Hall.*

1. *Went on his journey.* Heb. יָסַר רַגְלָיו *yissa raglav, lifted up his feet.* The phrase is emphatic, and implies that he travelled on briskly and cheerfully, notwithstanding his age, being refreshed in his spirit by the recent manifestation of the divine favor. Thus, Ps. 74. 3, 'Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations;' i. e. come speedily for our deliverance. A Jewish commentator says, 'His heart lifted up his feet,' an expression strikingly indicative of the buoyancy and light-heartedness with which he re-commenced his travels. Although many a weary day's journey still lay between him and the place of his destination, and much of uncertainty, danger, and fatigue attended his solitary way, yet such was the influence of the cheering assurances he had re-

the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone

ceived of the divine presence and protection, that he proceeded on his course on the following morning with feelings of alacrity and joy to which he had been before a stranger. The effect of his feelings on the remainder of his journey would almost appear to be hinted by the brevity with which the historian recounts it; for the four hundred miles are despatched in a single verse, 'He lifted up his feet, and came into the land of the people of the east.' 'The joy of the Lord was Jacob's strength; it became as oil, wherewith his soul being supplied, he was made more lithe, nimble, and fit for action. He that is once soaked in this oil, and bathed with Jacob in this bath at Bethel, will cheerfully do or suffer aught for God's sake. Let us pluck up our feet, pass from strength to strength, and take long and lusty strides toward heaven. It is but a little before us.' *Trapp*.—¶ *Of the people of the east.* Heb. בְּנֵי קֶדֶם *bene kedem, children or sons of the east.* That is, to the country of Mesopotamia lying to the east of Canaan. The people of this region are spoken of under a similar designation, Judg. 8. 3. 1 Kings, 4. 31. Job, 1. 3. The Gr. omits the word 'children,' and renders *εις γην ανατολων, to the land of the east.* It was 'from the east' that the Lord had formerly 'raised up the righteous man' (Abraham), and to the same region was his grandson now conducted, that he might 'serve for a wife.' Hos. 12. 12.

2. *A great stone was upon the well's mouth.* 'In Arabia, and in other places, they are wont to close and cover up their wells of water, lest the sand, which is put into motion by the winds there, like the water of a pond, should fill them, and quite stop them up. This is the ac-

count Sir J. Chardin gives us in a note on Ps. 69. 15. I very much question the applicableness of this custom to that passage, but it will serve to explain, I think, extremely well, the view of keeping that well covered with a stone, from which Laban's sheep were wont to be watered; and their care not to leave it open any time, but to stay till the flocks were all gathered together, before they opened it, and then, having drawn as much water as was requisite to cover it up again immediately, Gen. 29. 2, 8. The extreme scarcity of water in those arid regions entirely justifies such vigilant and parsimonious care in the management of this precious fluid; and accounts for the fierce contentions about the possession of a well, which so frequently happened between the shepherds of different masters.' *Harmer*.

3. *Thither were all the flocks gathered.* Not only the flocks, but the shepherds with them. Both are included according to Heb. usage under one and the same term. So 'tents,' Gen. 13. 5, includes those who dwelt in them; 'horses,' Zech. 1. 8, includes their 'riders,' as appears from v. 11; and 'chariots,' 1 Chron. 19. 18, those who drove them. The word 'rolled,' immediately after, necessarily requires that 'shepherds' should be understood in 'flocks,' as otherwise we have a dialogue occupying several verses, and yet *no man* mentioned but Jacob; the only living creatures present beside himself being *three flocks of sheep*.—¶ *They rolled the stone from the well's mouth, &c.* There is an apparent discrepancy between this and the sequel of the narrative, which implies that the stone was not rolled away till Rachel came to the well. But this is easily reconciled by the remark, that the present verse simply informs us what it was *cus*

My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we.

5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him.

6 And he said unto them <sup>b</sup> Is he well? And they said, He is well:

<sup>b</sup> ch. 43. 27.

tomary to do at this well, while the rest of the passage describes what was afterwards done on this occasion in conformity with general usage. This idea is distinctly and properly preserved in the Lat. Vulgate; 'Morisque erat,' &c., and the custom was, when all the sheep were gathered together, &c. 'The passage, as a whole, is one that strongly illustrates the value of a well of water, and the care that was usually taken of it. Wells are still sometimes covered with a stone, or otherwise, to protect them from being choked up by the drifted sand; and it was probably to prevent the exposure of the well by too frequently removing the stone, that the shepherds did not water their flocks until the whole were assembled together; for it is not to be supposed that they waited because the united strength of all the shepherds was requisite to roll away the stone when Jacob was able singly to do so. When the well is private property, in a neighborhood where water is scarce, the well is sometimes kept locked, to prevent the neighboring shepherds from watering their flocks fraudulently from it; and even when left unlocked, some person is frequently so far the proprietor that the well may not be opened unless in the presence of himself, or of some one belonging to his household. Chardin, whose manuscripts furnished Harmer with an illustration of this text, conjectures, with great reason, that the present well belonged to Laban's family, and that the shepherds dared not open the well until Laban's daughter came with her father's flocks. Jacob, therefore, is not to be supposed

and behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

to have broken the standing rule, or to have done any thing out of the ordinary course; for the oriental shepherds are not at all persons likely to submit to the inference or dictation of a stranger. He, however, rendered a kind service to Rachel, as the business of watering cattle at a well is very tiresome and laborious.' *Pict. Bible*.

5. *Laban the son of Nahor.* That is, the grandson or descendant of Nahor; for he was the son of Bethuel. But this is the well-known usage of the Hebrew.

6 *Is he well?* Heb. *השלים לו* *hashalom-lo*, (is there) peace to him? i. e. not only health, but general welfare and prosperity; a sense often conveyed by the word 'peace.' This has ever been, and still is, the customary mode of salutation in the east, the Arabic word 'salaam,' which is constantly employed on such occasions, being derived from the Heb. *שלום* *shalom*. Gr. *εὐχαίρει*; *is he well?* On the subject of oriental salutations, see 'Scripture Illustrations,' p. 280.

7. *It is yet high day.* Heb. *עוד היום גדול* *od hayom gadol*, yet the day is great; i. e. a great part of the day yet remains. Gr. *ετι εστιν ημερα πολλη*, yet there is much day. 'Are people travelling through places where are wild beasts, those who are timid will keep troubling the party by saying, 'Let us seek for a place of safety:' but the others reply, 'Not yet; for the day is great.' 'Why should I be in such haste? the day is yet great.' When tired of working, it is remarked, 'Why, the day is yet great.' —'Yes, yes, you manage to leave off while the day is yet great.' *Roberts*.

8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and *till* they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

9 ¶ And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

• Exod. 2, 16.

As it was yet too early to gather the flocks into their cotes or stalls for the night, Jacob, who was well versed in the pastoral life, was at a loss to account for the fact that they were not watered and turned again to pasture, instead of wasting a good part of the day idly about the well. After being watered and allowed to rest themselves awhile in the shade in the middle of the day, (Cant. 1. 7.) the flocks were usually turned out again, to feed till sun-set.

8. *And they said, We cannot, &c., i. e.* either from physical inability *were not able*, or from moral incapacity, *not having the right*, as being contrary to compact or usage. Thus, in the latter sense, Gen. 34. 14, 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised;' it is contrary to law. Gen. 43. 32, 'Because the Egyptians *might not* eat bread with the Hebrews;' Heb. 'cannot.'—¶ *Till they roll the stone,* i. e. till the stone be rolled; the active for the passive; a very common idiom. Thus, Neh. 2. 7, 'If it please the king let letters *be given* me;' Heb. 'let them give me letters.' Est. 2. 2, 'Let there be fair young virgins *sought* for the king;' Heb. 'let them seek.' Is. 9. 6. 'Unto us a child is born, and his name *shall be called*;' Heb. 'One shall call his name.' So in the New Testament, Luke 16. 4, 'I am resolved what to do; that when I am put out of the stewardship, *they may receive me* into their houses;' i. e. that I may be received. So likewise, v. 9, 'that when ye fail (i. e. die) *they may receive you* into everlasting habitations;' i. e. that ye may be received. Rev. 12. 6, 'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, *that they should*

*feed her there*;' i. e. that she should be fed there.

9. *Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them.* Heb. כִּי רֹעָה הָיָה *ki roah hi, for she shepherdized, or acted the shepherdess.* 'The pastoral poetry of classical antiquity, which has been imitated more or less in all nations, has rendered us familiar with the idea of females of birth and attractions acting as shepherdesses long after the practice itself has been discontinued, and the employment has sunk into contempt. When nations originally pastoral, settled in towns, and adopted the refinements of life, the care of the sheep ceased to be a principal consideration, and gradually devolved upon servants or slaves, coming to be considered a mean employment, to which the proprietor or his household only gave a general and superintending attention. The respectability of the employment in these patriarchal times is not evinced by finding the daughter of so considerable a person as Laban engaged in tending the flocks, for in the East all drudgery devolves upon the females; but by our finding the *sons* of such persons similarly engaged in pastoral duties, which in Homer also appears to have been considered a fitting employment for the sons of kings and powerful chiefs. We are not aware that at present, in the East, the actual care of a flock or herd is considered a dignified employment. Forbes, in his 'Oriental Memoirs,' mentions that in the Brahmin villages of the Concan, women of the first distinction draw the water from wells, and tend the cattle to pasture, 'like Rebecca and Rachel.' But in this instance it cannot be because such employments have any dignity in

10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and <sup>d</sup> rolled the

<sup>d</sup> Exod. 2. 17.

them, but because the women are obliged to perform every servile office. So, among the Bedouin Arabs, and other nomade nations, the immediate care of the flocks devolves either upon the women or the servants; but most generally the latter, as the women have enough to occupy them in their multifarious domestic duties. However, among some tribes, it is the exclusive business of the young unmarried women to drive the cattle to pasture. 'Among the Sinai Arabs,' says Burckhardt, 'a boy would feel himself insulted were any one to say, 'Go and drive your father's sheep to pasture;' these words, in his opinion, would signify, 'You are no better than a girl.' These young women set out before sun-rise, three or four together, carrying some water and victuals with them, and they do not return until late in the evening. Throughout the day they continue exposed to the sun, watching the sheep with great care, for they are sure of being severely beaten by their father should any be lost. These young women are in general civil to persons who pass by, and ready enough to share with them their victuals and milk. They are fully able to protect their flocks against any ordinary depredation or danger, for their way of life makes them as hardy and vigorous as the men. *Pict. Bible.*

10. *And it came to pass, &c.* While they are yet speaking, Rachel, in the bloom of maiden beauty, and as innocent as the lambs which she tended, draws nigh with her fleecy charge. The meeting of the patriarch with his relative, the daughter of his mother's brother, was, as might be expected, replete with tender interest, and we may

stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

11 And Jacob 'kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

\* ch. 33. 4. & 45. 14. 15.

well suppose, that in proffering his aid in watering the flocks, his civility was quickened by a warmer impulse of kindness than he would have felt towards any other stranger. This was a labor which had to be performed twice in the day, and occupied a considerable space of time, so that the service rendered by Jacob was something more than a trifling attention. Whether he rolled away the stone by his own unassisted strength, is perhaps doubtful. It may have been ascribed to him because he bore a very active and conspicuous part in it. Thus, it is said of Joseph, Gen. 50. 14, 'after he had buried his father;' whereas, in v. 13, it is said that his (Jacob's) sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him. The presence of Rachel and the excited state of his own feelings would no doubt prompt him to put forth his very best exertions on the occasion. 'A light heart makes a strong hand.'

11. *And Jacob kissed Rachel, &c.* According to the simple manners of those ancient times. The tears shed on this occasion must have flowed from a full heart, and it is not, perhaps, difficult to imagine the mixture of emotions by which his bosom was agitated. On the one hand, beholding Rachel, and seeing in her every thing that was amiable and engaging, his heart overflowed with tenderness. But again his thoughts reverted, by natural association, to his mother; and every thing that revived her memory, even the very flocks of sheep that belonged to her brother, was full of pleasing yet saddening interest. From his mother, his father, his home, his mind would pass to the consideration of his own peculiar circumstances—alone

12 And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* <sup>f</sup> her father's brother, and that he *was* Rebekah's son; <sup>g</sup> and she ran and told her father.

13 And it came to pass when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that <sup>h</sup> he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

<sup>f</sup> ch. 13. 8. & 14. 16. <sup>g</sup> ch. 24. 28.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 24. 29.

and unattended in a land of strangers, anxious to secure a particular object, yet doubting whether he had grounds for hope in the lack of those inducements which were ordinarily essential to success. With such a complicated throng of feelings rushing at once upon him, and all heightened by the recollection of the precious and unexpected disclosures made to him at Bethel, who can wonder that the historian represents him as giving vent to the insuppressible burden of his feelings in a flood of tears?

12. *And Jacob told Rachel, &c.* It must have excited surprise in Rachel's mind to see a stranger so attentive in watering her flock, and still more so to receive from him so affectionate a salutation; but now, having relieved his heart by a burst of weeping, he tells her who he is; he is her father's near kinsman, Rebekah's son! On hearing this she was too much overjoyed not to run at once and communicate the tidings to her family. This brings on another scene of affecting salutations, and Jacob's subsequent recital of his interesting story so tenderly impresses Laban, that he addresses him in the most affectionate language, 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh,'—a common Hebraism for expressing near relationship, and probably derived from the creation of Eve

13. *Heard the tidings.* Heb. שמע *shemec* *shema*, heard the hearing,

14 And Laban said to him, 'Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh: and he abode with him the space of a month.

15 ¶ And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what *shall* thy wages be?

<sup>i</sup> ch. 2. 23. Judg. 9. 2. 2 Sam. 5. 1. & 19. 12, 13.

i. e. the word or matter heard. The corresponding Gr. term occurs Rom. 10. 16, 'Who hath believed our *report*?' Gr. *akon*, our *hearing*. The phrase is sometimes explained by parallel expressions. Thus, where one Evangelist, Mark 1. 28, says, 'His *fame* (Gr. his hearing) spread abroad,' another, Luke 4. 37, says, 'His *fame* (Gr. his sound or echo) went out into every place;' the original words being different.—¶ *All these things.* That is, all the particulars relative to the present journey. The contrast between the humble style in which Jacob now appeared before him, and the equipage which had distinguished the mission sent in behalf of Isaac for a similar purpose, made it proper that he should go into a full detail on this head.

14. *The space of a month.* Heb. חודש ימים *hodesh yamim*, a month of days, i. e. a full month; as a year of days, 2 Sam. 14. 28, is a full year. It is not implied by this that Jacob stayed no longer than a month with Laban, but that he staid with him, in the first instance, the space of a month, and at the expiration of this period entered into a definite contract with him for a longer term.

15. *Because thou art my brother, &c.* That is, my kinsman. The latitude with which this word and its cognates, 'sister,' 'son,' &c., are used in the sacred writings, has already been adverted to, Gen. 12. 13. During the first month of his stay, Jacob, far from being an idle guest, employed himself about



16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

17 Leah *was* tender-eyed, but

his uncle's business; but nothing was said with respect to terms. On such a subject it was not for Jacob to speak; so Laban very properly intimated that he did not wish to take advantage of his near relationship, and obtain gratuitous service from him any more than from any other man. This suggestion brought out the declaration of Jacob's love for Rachel.

17. *Leah was tender-eyed, &c.* Authorities are about equally divided as to the true import of this phrase; some contending that it is designed to indicate a beauty, others a defect in Leah. The Gr. has *ασθενεις* *weak, infirm*. Chal. 'Fair.' Vulg. 'Blear-eyed.' Jerus. Targ. 'Tender with weeping and praying.' In this diversity of rendering, it is scarcely possible to speak with positiveness of the true meaning of the phrase. As the peculiarity denoted by the term is mentioned by way of contrast to Rebekah's beauty, we think it most probable, on the whole, that it was some natural blemish, or some accidental distemper in the eye, which greatly injured the countenance. The sense of the original רַכֹּחַ *rakkoth*, is doubtless closely allied to that of *weak, tender, delicate*.—¶ *Beautiful and well-favoured.* That is, having a *fine shape* and *fine features*, the two grand requisites of personal beauty.

18. *I will serve thee seven years, &c.* This he proffered because he had no money or other goods, which he could give to the father for his daughter. Among many people of the East, in ancient and modern times, the custom has always been, not for the bride to bring a dowry to the bridegroom, but the bridegroom must, in a manner, purchase

Rachel *was* beautiful and well-favoured.

18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, \* I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

\* ch. 31. 41. 2 Sam. 3. 14.

the girl whom he intends to marry, from the father. Therefore Shechem says, (ch. 34. 12.) to Dinah's father and brothers, 'Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.' In the same manner Tacitus relates that among the ancient Germans the wife did not bring the dowry to the man, but the man to the woman. 'The parents and relations are present, who examine the gifts, and choose, not such as are adapted to female dress, or to adorn the bride, but oxen, and a harnessed horse, a shield, and a sword. In return for these presents he receives the wife.' This custom still prevails among the Bedouins. 'When a young man meets with a girl to his taste, he asks her of her father through one of his relations: they now treat about the number of camels, sheep, or horses, for the Bedouins never save any money, and their wealth consists only in cattle. A man that marries must therefore literally purchase his wife, and the fathers are most fortunate who have many daughters. They are the principal riches of the family. When, therefore, a young man negotiates with the father whose daughter he intends to marry, he says, 'Will you give me your daughter for fifty sheep, six camels, or twelve cows?' If he is not rich enough to give so much, he offers a mare or foal. The qualities of the girl, the family and the fortune of him that intends to marry her, are the principal considerations in making the bargain. (*D'Arvieux*) This is confirmed by Seetzen, in his account of the Arab tribes whom he visited in 1803. The ceremonies at the marriage of a wandering Arab are remarkable,

19 And Laban said, *It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man abide with me.*

a young Arab knows a girl who pleases him; he goes to her father, and makes her wishes known to him. The latter speaks to his daughter. 'Daughter,' says he, 'there is one who asks you for his wife: the man is good, and it depends upon yourself if you will become his wife; you have my consent.' If the girl refuses, there is an end of the matter; if she is contented, the father returns to his guest, and informs him of the happy intelligence. 'But,' he adds, 'I demand the price of the girl.' This consists of five camels; but generally, by the intervention of others, a couple more are added, and those given are frequently miserable enough. When the young man, although otherwise an unexceptionable match, had no property which enabled him to furnish the requisite payments and presents, some service or enterprise was occasionally accepted from the suitor as an equivalent. Thus Jacob, being destitute of property, and having no other prospect than a younger brother's share in the inheritance of his father, offers seven years' service as an equivalent for what Laban might otherwise have expected in parting with his daughter. In a similar case, when another unprovided younger brother, David, loved Michal, the daughter of King Saul, the father proposed to the suitor, and actually accepted from him, a successful enterprise against the Phillistines as an equivalent for the ordinary advantages which the father derived from the marriage of his daughter. (1 Sam. 18. 25.) The usage of an unprovided young man to serve the father, whose daughter he sought in marriage, has been found by travellers to exist in many countries distant from each other. Out of various illustrations which we could quote, we shall content ourselves with one mentioned in Buckhardt's

'Travels in Syria,' which not only affords a striking parallel, but is the more interesting from its occurring at no very great distance from the scene of patriarchal narrative. In his account of the inhabitants of the Haouran, a region south of Damascus, this traveller says, 'I once met a young man who had served eight years for his food only; at the expiration of that period he obtained in marriage the daughter of his master, for whom he would otherwise have had to pay seven or eight hundred piastres. When I saw him, he had been married three years, but he complained bitterly of his father-in-law, who continued to require of him the performance of the most servile offices without paying him any thing, and thus prevented him from setting up for himself and his family.' In his account of Kerek, the same traveller describes it as a customary thing for a young man without property to serve the father five or six years as a menial servant, in compensation for the price of the girl. Thus Jacob also served seven years for Rachel, and it was well for him that, according to the touching and beautiful expression of the text, these seven years 'seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he bore to her.' *Pict. Bible.*

19. *Better that I should give her to thee, &c.* 'So said Laban, in reference to his daughter Rachel; and so say fathers in the East, under similar circumstances. The whole affair is managed in a *business-like way*, without any thing like a consultation with the maiden. Her likes and dislikes are out of the question. The father understands the matter perfectly, and the mother is very knowing; therefore they manage the transaction. This system, however, is the fruitful source of that *general* absence of domestic happiness which prevails there.

She has, perhaps, never seen the man with whom she is to spend her days. He may be young; he may be aged; he may be repulsive or attractive. The whole is a lottery to her. Have the servants or others whispered to her something about the match? she will make her inquiries; but the result will never alter the arrangements: for though her soul abhor the thoughts of meeting him, yet it must be done.' *Roberts*. 'We have already remarked, that the propriety of giving a female in marriage to the nearest relation who can lawfully marry her, is to this day generally admitted among the Bedouin Arabs and other Oriental tribes. The same principle was certainly in operation in the patriarchal times, but its close application in the present instance seems to have escaped notice. It will be observed that Jacob was the first cousin to Laban's daughters, and, according to existing Arab usages, he had in that character the best possible claim to them, or one of them, in marriage. His elder brother, Esau, had perhaps in this view a preferable claim to the elder daughter, Leah; but Jacob, himself a younger brother, had an unquestionable claim to Rachel, the youngest daughter of Laban, and therefore, independently of his affection for her, it was quite in the customary course of things that he should apply for Rachel in the first instance. Among all the Bedouin Arabs at the present day, a man has the exclusive right to the hand of his first cousin; *he* is not obliged to marry her, but *she* cannot be married to another without his consent. The father of the girl cannot refuse him, if he offers a reasonable payment, which is always something less than would be demanded from a stranger. For this, and much other information in the course of these notes, we are indebted to Burckhardt, whose work on the Bedouins supplies a valuable mass of information, the applicability of which to the illustration of the Scrip-

tures does not appear to have been hitherto perceived.' *Pict. Bible*. Had Laban really possessed the generosity which his words *seem* to express, he would have given Jacob the object of his choice without compelling him to wait seven years for her. Though it was proper for Jacob to make the offer he did, it was mean and sordid for Laban to accept it. But it is evident that his own private interest was all that he studied. In his sister Rebekah's marriage there were presents of gold and silver, and costly raiment—things which wrought much on his mind. But here were none of these moving inducements. Here was a poor man who could only *talk* of promised blessings; but upon these he set no value. He was governed by *sight*, and not by *faith*; and seeing that Abraham's descendants were partial to his family, he resolved to make his market of it. 'Indeed he *sold* her to him for some years' service. This was *Laban* or *Nabal*, choose you which. Their names were not more like than their natures.' *Trapp*. God makes use elsewhere of the circumstance of this servitude of Jacob to keep up a spirit of humility, as well as a memory of their ancestry, among the children of Israel. It was a part of the confession required to be made by every Israelite when he presented his basket of first ripe fruits before the Lord, 'A Syrian *ready to perish* was my father, alluding to Jacob's poverty and distress when he first came, at this time, into Syria. Again, when the prophet Hosea, ch. 12. 12, reproves the people for their luxury and pride, and haughtiness, he reminds them that 'Jacob *fled* into the country of Syria, and Israel *served* for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*.' It would, no doubt, tend to abate the loftiness of spirit of many of the wealthy and the great of this world, if they would look back upon the humble and perhaps *servile* condition of the founders of their families.

20 And Jacob <sup>1</sup> served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

<sup>1</sup> ch. 30. 26. Hos. 12. 12.

20. *They seemed unto him but a few days*, &c. As human nature is constituted, it is not easy perhaps to avoid some degree of surprise at this intimation. Our first impressions would undoubtedly be that love would operate directly in a contrary way, causing the time to appear rather long than short. To a doting husband, absorbed in the object of his affections, the period of seven years might, one would say, appear but as a few fleeting days; but how it could so have seemed to an ardent lover dwelling under the same roof with her upon whom his heart was set, is not so obvious. For this reason some have been confident in the belief that what is here spoken is expressive of what it appeared *when it was past*; or, in other words, that Rachel was given to Jacob at the *beginning* of the stipulated term, a week after his nuptials with Leah. In accordance with this view of the subject, those who hold it would render the preceding clause 'had served' instead of 'served,' as the Hebrew will no doubt admit. But the proposed interpretation on the whole seems less natural than the common one, especially upon reference to v. 25, where he says, 'Did I not serve with thee for Rachel?' where the implication of a *past* service is too palpable to be explained away. It cannot, therefore, be adopted without appearing to do violence to the letter of the text; and it is easier to account for the time seeming short to Jacob, than for a mode of expression so foreign to the *alleged* sense of the writer. It should be borne in mind that Jacob was now seventy-seven years of age, and consequently had passed those days when *passion* would be apt to overmaster *reason*. With all due allowance for the ardent temperament of the east, we may still

21 ¶ And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife (for my days are fulfilled) that I may <sup>m</sup> go in unto her.

<sup>m</sup> Judg. 15. 1.

believe that the love affairs of an aged patriarch would be carried on more soberly and sedately, and savor less of passionate impetuosity, than at an earlier period of life. His affection, moreover, had the solace of the daily society of its object. The tedium of absence would not operate to make the days and months linger in their course. The pleasant commerce which he enjoyed would make the recurrence of his daily task easy and delightful. Every morning would he commence his accustomed labors with renewed spirit and activity. Every evening would he return from his occupation, with pleasing anticipations of the period when his toils would be remunerated and his wishes crowned. Thus the seven years of service, cheered by the constant presence, and sweetened by the daily conversation of his beloved, would imperceptibly glide away. That an earlier consummation of his wishes would have been agreeable, we cannot question. But the whole tenor of the divine dispensations seems to have been ordered with a view to exercise the *patience* of the patriarch, and Jacob had only to reflect back a few years to be reminded of what his *impatience* had cost him, and thus to be reconciled to a lot which, after every abatement, had so many sweet alleviations. As to the objection that according to this construction Jacob must have had twelve children in seven years, it may be answered that this is not an improbable number to be born in that time from two wives and as many handmaids. Besides, as God had promised a numerous posterity to Abraham, an extraordinary fruitfulness might reasonably be expected.

21. *Give me my wife*. That is, my betrothed, affianced wife, though the

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and <sup>a</sup> made a feast.

23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

24 And Laban gave unto his

<sup>a</sup> Judg. 14. 10. John 2. 1, 2.

nuptials were not yet celebrated. Thus, Mt. 1. 20, 'Fear not to take unto thee Mary *thy wife*;' i. e. thy betrothed wife, or, as she is termed, Luke 2. 5, 'espoused wife.' See also Deut. 22. 23, 24, where this sense of the word 'wife' is indubitable.—† *My days are fulfilled.* The term of my stipulated service; the seven years agreed upon.

22 *Made a feast.* Heb. מִשְׁתֶּה *mish-teh*, a drinking, or a feast of drinking. See note on Gen. 19. 3. The word is rendered in the Gr. γάμος *a wedding*, whence the word 'wedding' is used in the New Testament and elsewhere, interchangeably with 'feast.' Thus, Luke 14. 7, 'When thou art bidden of any man to *a wedding*,' i. e. to a common feast. Est. 9. 22, 'That they should make them days of *feasting and joy*.' Gr. 'Days of *wedding and joy*.' As marriage was a very solemn contract, there is much reason to believe that *sacrifices* were offered on the occasion, and *libations* poured out; and we know, that on festival occasions a cup of *wine* was offered to every guest: and as this was drunk with particular ceremonies, the feast might derive its name from this circumstance, which was the most prominent and observable on such occasions.

23. *And it came to pass in the evening, &c.* 'According to the custom of those eastern nations, the bride was conducted to the bed of her husband, with silence, in darkness, and covered from head to foot with a veil; circumstances, all of them favorable to the wicked, selfish plan which Laban had formed,

daughter Leah, Zilpah his maid, for a handmaid.

25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

26 And Laban said, It must not

to detain his son-in-law longer in his service. Leah is accordingly substituted instead of her sister. And he who, by subtilty and falsehood, stole away the blessing intended for his brother, is punished for his deceit, by finding a Leah where he expected a Rachel. He who employed undue advantage to arrive at the right of the first-born, has undue advantage taken of him in having the first-born put in the place of the younger. He who could practise upon a father's blindness, though to obtain a laudable end, is, in his turn, practised upon by a father, employing the cover of the night, to accomplish a very unwarrantable purpose.' *Hunter.* In such a way God often deals with men, causing them to reap the bitter fruits of sin, even when they have lamented and forsaken it. 'When thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.'

24. *And Laban gave, &c.* 'It is still customary in the east for a father, who can afford it, to transfer to his daughter, on her marriage, some female slave of his household, who becomes her confidential domestic and humble friend in her new home, but not the less a slave. This slave forms a link between the old and new households, which often proves irksome to the husband; but he has little, if any, control over the female slaves in his establishment.' *Pict. Bible.*

26. *And Laban said, It must not be so, &c.* As selfish and mercenary as Laban was, and as little scrupulous about the means of promoting his own advantage, it can scarcely be supposed that he

be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born.

27 ° Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week : and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

• Judg. 14. 12.

should have ventured upon the extraordinary step here mentioned, had such a practice been in that age and country wholly unknown. But there is reason to believe that Laban's statement here was correct, though he evidently ought, in common honesty, to have acquainted Jacob with this custom before he made his bargain with him. Mr. Roberts says of the marriage customs in India, that 'when the eldest daughter is deformed, or blind, or deaf, or dumb, *then the younger* may be given first : but under other circumstances it would be disgraceful in the extreme. Should any one wish to *alter* the order of things, the answer of Laban is given. Should a father, however, have a very advantageous offer for a younger daughter, he will exert all his powers to get off the elder ; but until this can be accomplished, the younger will *not* be married. Younger *brothers* are sometimes married first, but even this takes place but very seldom.' The same usage still exists in many parts of the east. 'The Rev. John Hartley, in his 'Researches in Greece and the Levant,' relates an anecdote of a young Armenian in Smyrna, who solicited in marriage a younger daughter who had obtained his preference. The girl's parents consented to the match ; but when the time for solemnizing the marriage arrived, the eldest daughter was conducted by the parents to the altar, and the young man was quite unconsciously married to her. The deception was not discovered till it could not be rectified. Mr. Hartley adds 'It was in a conversation with an

29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, Bilhah his handmaid, to be her maid.

30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him 'yet seven other years.

• ver. 20. Deut. 21. 15 • ch. 30. 26. & 31 41. Hos. 12. 12.

Armenian in Smyrna that this fact was related to me. I naturally exclaimed, 'Why, that is just the deception that was practised upon Jacob !' 'What deception ?' he exclaimed. As the Old Testament is not yet translated into any language with which the Armenians are familiar, he was ignorant of the story. Upon giving him a relation of Jacob's marriage, as related in Gen. 29, he assented to it at once as a circumstance in no respect improbable. Mr Hartley says, the father excused his conduct in precisely the same way as Laban, alleging that custom did not warrant the marriage of the younger before the elder daughter. We have heard of cases in which, when a man wished to obtain a younger daughter, he found it the best course to do all in his power to promote the previous marriage of her elder sister. A father also will often exert all his powers to get off his *elder* daughter, when a very advantageous and acceptable match for the younger is proposed to him.' *Pict. Bible.*

27. Fulfil her week. 'We read, that a great feast was made, after which Leah was consigned to Jacob. It is not said how long the feast lasted ; but it was doubtless a week ; and now Laban says in effect :—'Let there be another week of feasting for Rachel, after which she also shall be given to thee, and then thou shalt serve me yet other seven years.' It is evident that the marriage of Jacob with Leah and Rachel took place nearly at the same time. Calmet, indeed, thinks, that 'the week' refers to Leah's marriage ; but this is an error

31 ¶ And when the LORD <sup>r</sup> saw that Leah *was* hated, he <sup>a</sup> opened her womb : but Rachel *was* barren.

32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name

<sup>r</sup> Ps. 127. 3.    <sup>a</sup> ch. 30. 1.

for in that case the festivities must have been *after* the final completion of the marriage ; whereas, as Calmet himself states, the bride was not consigned to the bridegroom until after the days of feasting had expired. As to the seven days' feasting, the Rabbins acquaint us that this term was a matter of indispensable obligation upon all married men ; and that they were to allow seven days for the marriage of every wife they took, even though they should marry several on the same day. In this case they made so many wedding weeks successively as they married wives. These seven days of rejoicing were commonly spent in the house of the woman's father, after which the bride was conducted in great state to her husband's house. (See Calmet, article 'Marriage,' edit. 1732.) Thus we read, that Samson's wedding entertainment lasted seven full days (Judges 14. 17, 18,) and also that of Tobias (Tobit 11. 19.) When the bride was a widow, the festivities lasted but three days. Similar practices have prevailed among other nations. The famous Arabian romance of 'Antar,' translated by Mr. Terrick Hamilton, is full of allusions to this custom.' *Pict. Bible*. Laban's policy was to obtain Jacob's voluntary consent to the marriage, which would be secured by his cohabiting and rejoicing with her during the week, and then he knew the nuptial knot would be too fast tied to be afterward loosed.

31. *That Leah was hated.* That is, *loved less*. The expression is not *absolute*, but *comparative*. Apart from any thing repulsive in her person, this effect was perhaps to be expected from the part she had voluntarily borne in

Reuben : for she said, Surely the LORD hath <sup>t</sup> looked upon my affliction ; now therefore my husband will love me.

33 And she conceived again, and <sup>t</sup> Exod. 3. 7. & 4. 31. Deut. 26. 7. Ps. 25. 18. & 106. 44.

the imposition practised upon him. From this and the preceding verse, we obtain a clue to the genuine meaning of the Heb. שָׂנְאָה *sanah*, to *hate*, in certain disputed passages. It evidently implies nothing more than a *less degree* of love. The subsequent narrative makes it plain that Jacob did not *hate* Leah, in the ordinary acceptation of that term ; but he felt *less affection* for her than for her sister. So by the declaration Mal. 1. 2, 3, Rom. 9. 15. 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' we are simply to understand that God had shown a greater degree of affection for Jacob and his posterity than for Esau and his descendants, which was evinced in giving the former a better earthly portion than he did the latter, and by choosing his family to be the progenitors of the Messiah. From this language alone no inference can be drawn as to the *eternal* states of the two nations. It is worthy of notice in this case, how God balances the good and ill of the present life. Leah is slighted in comparison with Rachel, but he gives children to her, while he withholds them from the other ; and children in a family whose chief blessedness consisted in a *promised seed*, were, of course, very highly prized.

32. *Called his name Reuben.* Heb. רְעוּבֵן *re-u-ben*, lit. *see ye a son*. The names of the four sons successively born to her were all significant, and expressive of her state of mind, either as grieved for want of an interest in her husband's heart, or as prompted by piety to view the hand of God in all that befel her.

33. *She called his name Simeon.* Heb. שִׁמְעוֹן *shimon*, *hearing*, from שָׁמַע *shama*, to *hear*.

bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this *son* also: and she called his name Simeon.

34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined un-

to me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name "Judah, and left bearing.

• Matt. 1. 2.

34. *Therefore was his name called Levi*, Heb. לֵוִי *levi*, (pron. *laivee*), *joined*, from לָוַח *lavah*, to *join*.

35. *She called his name Judah*. Heb. יְהוּדָה *yehudah*, *praise*, from יָדָה *yadah*, to *give thanks*, *praise*, *celebrate*.—¶ *Left bearing*. Heb. תַּמּוּד בִּלְדָּתָהּ *taamod milledeth*, *stood from bearing*. 'When a mother has ceased to bear children, should a person say it is not so, others will reply, *'She stood from bearing at such a time.'* Roberts. Our common translation would seem to imply that she now *ceased entirely* from having children; but the original purports no more than that she *ceased for a time* from child-bearing, and this is the sense evidently required, as she had three more children after this, Gen. 30. 17—21.

REMARKS.—The following brief practical hints will easily refer themselves to the several verses on which they are founded.

(1.) Cheering tokens of the divine presence are greatly calculated to quicken zeal and accelerate speed in the way of duty.

(2.) Objects and incidents of the most common occurrence, and of the slightest heed to others, often have the character of special providences in the estimation of the spiritually-minded.

(3.) The civility, kindness, and benevolence, which distinguish good men at home, should characterize them on their journeys abroad. They know not what precious fruits they may reap from attentions shown to strangers.

(4.) The waste of time by men in any occupation, will not fail to grieve the

hearts and prompt the admonitions of those who have been trained to habits of active industry.

(5.) The outward expressions of a sincere and cordial affection, as they are prompted by nature, so they are sanctioned by religion.

(6.) If the people of God are melted to tears, or kindled to transports, it is usually in view of some striking indications of a special providence.

(7.) The plea of kindred should never interfere with the claims of justice.

(8.) Unprincipled men will not scruple oftentimes to admit the propriety of a conduct which they never mean to practice.

(9.) How sordid, and how deeply poisoned by avarice, must have become the hearts of those parents who value their children only so far as they are *profitable* to them!

(10.) Hard and long service is made easy and short where love is the moving spring of action.

(11.) Good men, in the unsuspecting simplicity of their hearts, are sometimes unwarily seduced into evil by the subtlety of mercenary deceivers, but when aware of their error, they are filled with a holy indignation against the fraud practised upon them.

(12.) The plea of custom, fashion, decorum, &c., is often set up as an extenuation of conduct directly at variance with the will of God.

(13.) Children are *joining* mercies between husband and wife. As many children as parents have, so many bonds of love exist between them



## CHAP. XXX.

AND when Rachel saw that <sup>a</sup> she bare Jacob no children, Rachel <sup>b</sup> envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, <sup>c</sup> or else I die.

ch. 29. 31. <sup>b</sup> ch. 37. 11. <sup>c</sup> Job. 5. 2.

## CHAP. XXX.

1. *Rachel envied her sister.* Heb. תַּקְנָנָה *tekanna*. The original expresses by one and the same word, the emotions of *envy*, *zeal*, and *jealousy*. But how it is to be interpreted in any given connexion, whether in a good or bad sense, can be determined only by the context. That the evil affection denoted by the term is stronger and more baneful in its consequences than anger, is to be inferred from such passages as the following, Prov. 27. 4, 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before *envy*?' Prov. 14. 30, '*Envy* is as rottenness in the bones.' Cant. 8. 6, '*Jealousy* is cruel as the grave.' 'Her *envy* was no doubt sharpened in this case by the fact that Leah was her sister, and by the knowledge that she was herself the favorite and elected wife. She must have feared that she should lose her ascendancy over Jacob by the want of children. The natural domestic evils of polygamy must be rendered more intense when the wives are sisters; and this seems to be stated in the law (Lev. 18. 18.) as a reason why such marriages should not in future be contracted. 'Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to *vex* her,—beside the other in her lifetime.' Jacob was, in a great measure, forced by circumstances into such a connexion; but it does not appear that a marriage with two sisters at once was at this time considered singular or improper. The Arabians, who retained many patriarchal usages which the law forbade to the Jews, continued the practice until the time of Mohammed, who declared

2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, <sup>d</sup> Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

<sup>d</sup> ch. 16. 2. 1 Sam. 1. 5

such connexions unlawful.' *Pict Bible*.

† Give me children, or else I die. Heb. אִם אֵין מֵתָה אֲנֹכִי *im ain methah anoki*, if none, I am a dead woman, or a corse; i. e. I shall be as good as dead; my name will not be perpetuated; as to the raising up of seed, I shall be as though I had never been. See note on the expression, 'thou art a dead man,' Gen. 20. 3. A possible sense undoubtedly is, that she would die of vexation and grief; but the former we conceive to be the legitimate import of the phrase. She would intimate that without children she would be like a seed cast into the ground, which is never quickened. The idea is substantially the same as that conveyed by the ancient Jewish proverb, that 'the childless are but as the lifeless.' The eager desire for offspring among the Hebrew women is easily accounted for, if we bear in mind that the distinguishing blessing of Abraham was a numerous posterity, and in particular one illustrious person in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It was natural, then, that they should feel a laudable ambition to contribute to the fulfilment of the prophecy; and we are not to be surprised if many of Eve's daughters flattered themselves, like their first parent, with the hope of being the mother of the Messiah. But Rachel's language was that of a sinful impatience, for which it would seem, that in the righteous providence of God she afterwards paid dear, as she died in giving birth to Benjamin, ch. 37. 16—19.

2. *Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, &c.* His spirit was stirred within him rather by the reflection which

3 And she said, Behold, my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; <sup>f</sup> and she shall bear upon my knees, <sup>g</sup> that I may also have children by her.

4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid <sup>h</sup> to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 16. 2. <sup>f</sup> ch. 50. 23. Job 3. 12.  
<sup>g</sup> ch. 16. 2. <sup>h</sup> ch. 16. 3. & 35. 22.

her complaints cast upon God, than by any injury or injustice done to himself. It excited a holy resentment to find one whom he so tenderly loved failing to recognise her entire dependence on the power and providence of the Most High for the mercy desired; for the truth so plainly expressed by David, Ps. 127. 3, that 'children are a heritage of the Lord,' was no doubt as cordially held by the patriarch as by the monarch of Israel. His, therefore, was a 'being angry and sinning not;' and we may add, that if any thing ever tends to provoke anger in the bosom of the pious, it is not so much the sense of their own wrongs, as of the dishonor done to their heavenly Father. A rash demeanor, a murmuring or rebellious spirit towards him, grieves them to the heart, and they cannot forbear to rebuke it even in their nearest and dearest friends. Though they may love their persons, they will chide their sins.'—¶ *Am I in God's stead?* Am I greater than God to give thee what he has refused? Chal. 'Why dost thou ask children of me? Oughtest thou not rather to have asked them from before the Lord?' Arab. 'Am I above God, who hath withheld,' &c. A rightly framed spirit shudders at the thought of being accounted in God's stead in any respect.

3. *Go in unto her.* This is similar to the case of Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham. Such things, we are told by travellers, happen to this day in India and China, often with the full concurrence,

6 And Rachel said, God hath <sup>i</sup> judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.

7 And Bilhah, Rachel's maid, conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

8 And Rachel said, with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my

<sup>i</sup> Ps. 35. 24. & 43. 1. Lam. 3. 59.

and at the request of the lawful wife, when she is herself sterile, or when the children are dead and she has ceased to hope for more.—¶ *She shall bear upon my knees.* That is, bear children which I may nurse and dandle on my knees as though they were my own; which shall be mine adoptively. Accordingly, v. 6, she calls Bilhah's son her own. The handmaid was the sole property of the mistress, and therefore not only all her labor, but even the children borne by her, were also her property. For this reason these female slaves may be said to have borne children *vicariously* for their mistresses.—¶ *That I may also have children by her.* Heb. אִבְנֵי אִבְנֵהּ *ibbaneh*, may be builded by her. See note on Gen. 16. 2.

6. *God hath judged me.* Heb. דָּנָנִי *dannani*, judged me, whence דָּן *dan*, judging, the name given to her child. The original word for *judge*, when used in reference to the righteous, sometimes implies chastisement, or affliction for sin, as 1 Cor. 11. 32, 'when we are *judged* we are *chastened* of the Lord;' and sometimes the vindication or deliverance of those who are unrighteously condemned, afflicted, or punished, as 1 Sam. 24. 15, 'The Lord therefore be *judge*, and *judge* between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.' The latter sense especially is to be understood here.

8. *With great wrestlings, &c.* Heb. נַפְתָּלֵי אֱלֹהִים *naphṭele elohim*, wrest

sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name <sup>k</sup> Naphtali.

9 When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah, her maid, and <sup>l</sup> gave her Jacob to wife.

10 And Zilpah, Leah's maid, bare Jacob a son.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. 4. 13. <sup>l</sup> ver. 4

*lings of God*; i. e. great, urgent, vehement wrestlings. See the Heb. idiom illustrated, Gen. 23. 6. The original comes from a root, פתל *pathal*, signifying to *twist, wreath, intertwist, intertwine*, and hence applied to *wrestling*, from the efforts of the combatants to *intwine* or *interlock* their limbs so as to throw each other to the ground. That the expression, as used by Rachel, implies what we ordinarily understand by *earnest wrestling with God in prayer*, is highly probable, and so the Chal. expressly renders it; but as she says that she wrestled with her sister, we may suppose that it implies the diversified and anxious expedients to which she resorted, *turning, writhing, struggling* by crafty stratagems to effect her object. Hence the name 'Naphtali,' i. e. *my wrestling*; called 'Nephtalim,' Mat 4. 13.

11. *A troop cometh, &c.* Heb. בגד *ba-gad*, either *a troop cometh, or with a troop*, as the original has a double reading. The rendering in our version is taken from the margin of the Heb. Bible, which has בא גד *ba gad*, *a troop cometh*, in two distinct words; while in the text itself these words coalesce into one, בגד *ba-gad*, *with or in a troop*. Yet all this proceeds upon the assumption that the true sense of גד *gad*, is *a troop*, which is doubtful. Nearly all the earlier versions give the sense of *luck, fortune, or prosperity*, derived perhaps from some superstitious notion of the auspicious influence of some one of the heavenly bodies, either the sun, moon, or one of the planets. As in Arabic the planet Jupiter is called *Gad*, and the Targum of

11 And Leah said, A troop cometh, and she called his name Gad.

12 And Zilpah, Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters <sup>m</sup> will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

<sup>m</sup> Prov. 31. 28. Luke 1. 48.

Jonathan renders the present phrase, מַזְלָא טוֹבָא *mazzela toba*, *a propitious star*. The Chal., moreover, has גַּד אַתָּא *atha gad*, *fortune cometh*. Some have supposed that this name was applied as the title of a species of divinity, and that from it comes, by remote derivation, our terms *good* and *God*. See the commentators on Is. 65. 11, where the same word occurs as the name of an idol. The Gr. translates it εὐτυχία *with good fortune*, and the Vulg. 'Feliciter,' *happily, fortunately*. But it is much more likely that these versions should have mistaken the meaning of the original, than that Leah, who had evinced so pious a recognition of God in naming her other children, should now all of a sudden so strangely act the heathen as to acknowledge the power of a fictitious deity. On the whole, therefore, we adhere to the rendering given in our Eng. Bible as the most correct, particularly when compared with Jacob's interpretation of the name in Gen. 49. 19, 'Gad, *a troop* (גַּדֻד *gadud*) shall overcome him,' &c.

13. *And Leah said, Happy am I, &c.* Heb. בְּאַשְׁרֵי *beoshri*, *in my happiness, or in my blessedness*. Gr. μακαρία εἰω, *O happy I!* —¶ *The daughters will call me blessed*. All coming generations will felicitate me on my happy lot. Marked allusions to this phraseology occur elsewhere. Prov. 31. 23, 'Her children arise up and *call her blessed*.' Cant. 6. 9, 'The daughters saw her, and *blessed her*.' Luke 1. 48, 'For, behold, from henceforth all generations *shall call me blessed*.—¶ *Called his name Asher*

14 ¶ And Reuben went in the days of wheat-harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought

them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, <sup>a</sup> Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 25. 30.

That is, *happy, blessed*. The following scriptural names are all of the same etymological import with 'Asher,' viz. Felix, Fortunatus, Eutyclus, Tychicus. So among the Greeks and Latins, Eudemon, Eutyclus, Macarius, Faustus, Faustulus, Felicianus.

14. *In the days of wheat-harvest*. Which in that climate ordinarily occurred in the month of May.—¶ *Mandrakes*. Heb. דודאים *dudaim*, lovely, amiable, from דוד *dud*, beloved; probably from the common opinion of their tendency to excite amorous propensities. The Gr. renders them *μηλα μανδραγορων*,

*apples of mandragora*, or *mandrake apples*; the Chal. יברוקין *yabrokin*, a word of Arabic origin applied to this plant from the resemblance of its smell to the rank savor of a goat. By some they are supposed to have been, not fruits, but flowers of peculiar beauty and fragrance. The mass of commentators, however, understand by 'Dudaim,' *mandrakes*, a species of melon, abounding in Palestine and the East, and which was in high repute for its prolific virtues, as from it philtres or love-potions were made. The plant grows low like the lettuce, to which its leaves have a



MANDRAKE.

15 And she said unto her, ° *Is it* a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to-night for thy son's mandrakes.

16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's man-

° Numb. 16. 9, 13.

great resemblance, except that they have a dark green color. The flowers are purple, and the fruit when ripe, in the beginning of May, is of the size and color of a small apple, exceedingly ruddy, and of a most agreeable odor. Hasselquist, speaking of Nazareth in Galilee, says, 'What I found most remarkable at this village was the great number of *mandrakes* which grew in a valley below it. I had not the pleasure to see this plant in blossom, the fruit now (May 5th,) hanging ripe on the stem, which lay withered on the ground. From the season in which this mandrake blossoms and ripens fruit, one might form a conjecture that it was Rachel's *Dudaim*. These were brought to her in the wheat harvest, which in Galilee is in the month of May, about this time, and the mandrake was now in fruit.' The word occurs only here and Cant. 7. 13, 'The mandrakes give a smell,' which Michaelis thus paraphrases: 'Now the voluptuous mandrakes, widely exhaling their somniferous odor, breathe and excite to love.'

17. *God hearkened unto Leah.* That is, mercifully had respect to her, notwithstanding her infirmities. We do not read that she prayed unto him, yet he condescended to bless her. See what is said, Gen. 21. 17, on God's *hearing the voice* of a particular condition or estate.

18. *She called his name Issachar.* Heb.

drakes. And he lay with her that night.

17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.

18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

20 And Leah said, God hath en-

יִשָּׂשכָר *yissakar*, he bringeth hire, or he beareth wages, or reward. The word is written in the original with the letters of 'Issaschar,' but with the vowel-points of 'Issachar,' suppressing the sound of the latter *s* which is quite unusual, and the reason of which is unknown, unless the interpretation of Ewald is admitted, who supposes the name to be contracted from יֵשֶׁשׁכָר *yesh sakar*, there is reward, the first *ש* *sh* being resolved in sound into the *ש* *s* following, though the ancient orthography has retained both *ש*'s. In looking upon her son as a 'reward' given her by God for yielding her maid to Jacob, we may probably suppose her laboring under a mistake. The Lord favored her not for that act, but in spite of it.

20. *Now will my husband dwell with me.* Heb. יִזְבְּלֵנִי *yizbeleni*, will dwell (with) me. Gr. ἀπεριελαύ με, will choose me. 'Many reasons concur to render the possession of sons an object of great anxiety to women in the east. The text expresses one of these reasons. Sons being no less earnestly desired by the husband than by the wife, a woman who has given birth to sons acquires an influence and respectability which strengthen with the number to which she is mother. To be without sons is not only a misfortune, but a disgrace to a woman, and her hold on the affections of her husband, and on her standing as

dued me *with* a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons: and she called his name <sup>p</sup> Zebulun.

21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

22 ¶ And God <sup>a</sup> remembered Ra-

<sup>p</sup> Matt. 4. 13. <sup>a</sup> ch. 8. 1. 1 Sam. 1. 19.

his wife, is of a very feeble description. Divorces are easily effected in the East. An Arab has only to enunciate the simple words, *ent taleka*—‘thou art divorced,’ which, in whatever heat or anger spoken, constitute a legal divorce.’ *Pict. Bible*. Mr. Roberts’s testimony is equivalent. ‘Should it be reported of a husband that he is going to forsake his wife *after* she has borne him children, people will say, ‘She has borne him sons; he will never, never leave her.’ To have children is a powerful tie upon a husband. Should she, however, not have any, he is almost certain to forsake her.’—¶ *Zebulun*. That is, *dwelling*; implying that he should be the cause or occasion of the *dwelling* together of his parents.

21. *Called her name Dinah*. Heb. דינה *dinah*, *judgment*; a word coming from the same root with Dan, v. 6. No reason is assigned by the mother for the name, but the inference seems fair that it was prompted by sentiments similar to those which led Rachel to adopt an equivalent name for her son by Bilhah, v. 6. ‘The simplicity of this announcement, contrasted with the exuberant thankfulness and exultation which accompany the birth of sons in this and the preceding chapter, is remarkably expressive to persons acquainted with the customs and feelings of the east. When there is prospect of a child, both the parents hope and pray that it may be a son. All their desires centre in male offspring, which is everywhere regarded as the greatest of blessings; and the disappointment is most acute when

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chel, and God hearkened to her, and <sup>r</sup> opened her womb.

23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away <sup>a</sup> my reproach:

24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, ‘The LORD shall add to me another son.

<sup>r</sup> ch. 29. 31. <sup>a</sup> 1 Sam. 1. 6. Isai. 4. 1. Luke 1. 25. <sup>a</sup> ch. 35. 17.

the child proves to be a female. This is not that the possession of a daughter is in itself regarded as an evil, but because her birth disappoints the sanguine hopes which had been entertained of the greater blessing. Time enables the little creature to win her way to the hearts of her parents. But it is only time that can reconcile them to their disappointment; and in the first instance the household in which a female child has been born, has the appearance of having been visited by some calamitous dispensation. Her birth is quite unmarked by the rejoicings and congratulations which greet the entrance of a son into the world, and every one is reluctant to announce the untoward event to the father; whereas, when the infant is a boy, the only question is, who shall be foremost to bear to him the joyful tidings.’ *Pict. Bible*.

23. *God hath taken away my reproach*. That is, the reproach of my barrenness. In like manner Elizabeth says, Luke, 1. 25, ‘Thus’ hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he looked on me, *to take away my reproach* among men.’ Comp. 1 Sam. 1. 6. Is. 4. 1.

24. *Called his name Joseph*. Heb. יוסף *yoseph*, *adding*, or, *he will add*. In Ps. 81. 6, and in the engraving on Aaron’s breastplate, Ex. 28. the name is written יְהוֹשֵׁפָט *yehoseph*, analogous to which we find 1 Chron. 10. 2, *Jonathan*, and 1 Sam. 31. 2, *Jehonathan*; and in like manner 2 Chron. 24. 1, *Joash*, and 2 Kings, 12. 1, *Jehoash*.—¶ *Shall add to me another son*. Thus prophetically declaring the event which was accom-

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25 ¶ And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, <sup>v</sup> Send me away, that I may go unto <sup>w</sup> mine own place, and to my country.

26 Give *me* my wives and my children, <sup>x</sup> for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

<sup>v</sup> ch. 24. 54, 56. <sup>w</sup> ch. 18. 33. & 31. 55.  
<sup>x</sup> ch. 29. 20, 30.

plished in the birth of Benjamin, Gen. 35, 18. Yet it should be remarked that the original will admit of its being rendered in the form of a prayer, 'May the Lord add another.'

25. *Send me away*, &c. Having now fulfilled the second seven years' period of service, and attained the age of about ninety years, Jacob's desire to return to his native country was prompted not only by his experience of the hard, selfish, unjust, and perfidious character of Laban, and an earnest anxiety once more to behold his aged parents before they died, but by a paramount regard to the promise of God. He remembered that this, the land of his sojourning, was not the land of his inheritance. He called to mind the hereditary hope of his family, the parting benediction of Isaac, the vision at Bethel, and under the influence of these impressions felt all the ties that bound him to Mesopotamia to give way. That he was finally induced to protract his stay somewhat longer with his uncle does not essentially militate with this view of his present feelings; for the determination was partly forced upon him by the urgent solicitation of Laban, whom he saw he could not leave without making him his enemy, and partly by the desire to provide more amply for his family, that he might not return empty-handed to his friends in Canaan. This he distinctly hints at below; 'When shall I provide for mine own house also?'

27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry: for* <sup>y</sup> I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me <sup>z</sup> for thy sake.

28 And he said, <sup>a</sup> Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

29 And he said unto him, <sup>b</sup> Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

<sup>y</sup> ch. 39. 3, 5. <sup>z</sup> ch. 26. 24. <sup>a</sup> ch. 29 15.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 31. 6, 38, 39, 40. Matt. 24. 45 Tit 2. 10.

27. *And Laban said unto him, I pray thee*, &c. Although Jacob's proposal to return to Canaan was very modestly made, yet his greedy kinsman, well aware of the advantages which had accrued to him from his nephew's faithful service, expresses much regret on hearing his departure spoken of. But it is not regret at the thought of parting with his daughters and his grand-children. It is not the tender concern of bidding a long farewell to a near relation and a devoted servant. No, it is regret at losing an instrument of gain. It is the sorrow of a man who loves only himself.—¶ *I have learned by experience*, &c. Heb. נִחַשְׁתִּי *nihashthi*, *I have learned by experiment*. Gr. οὐρανισαυην, *I have divined by birds*, or *augury*. The root of the original word is נָחַשׁ *nahash*, from which comes the Heb. of *serpent*, (Gen. 3. 1.) signifying *to ascertain by means of a close, subtle, and insidious inspection*. Laban had no doubt watched Jacob with the most jealous vigilance, and the conclusion to which he was brought was, that his kinsman was an object of the special superintending providence of God, and that he himself was blessed for his sake. Thus a testimony is sometimes extorted from the lips of the wicked, that they are prospered for the sake of the good.

28. *Appoint me thy wages*. Heb. נִקְבַּח *nokbah*, *puncture*, or *prick down*; i. e. state with the most absolute precision.

30 For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came*, and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now, when shall I provide for mine own house also?

• 1 Tim. 5. 8.

30. *It is now increased.* Heb. *יפרץ* *yphrotz*, broken forth, spread abroad; a term usually employed to signify a vast and sudden increase. Comp. Gen. 28. 14.—¶ *Since my coming.* Heb. *לרגלי* *leragli*, at my foot. The usage in regard to the original term for 'foot,' is peculiar. In some cases it obviously has the sense of *labor*, as Is. 58. 13, 'If thou turn away thy *foot* from the Sabbath;' i. e. if thou refrain from all *servile* work on the Sabbath. Is. 32. 20, 'Blessed are ye that send forth the *feet* of the ox and the ass;' i. e. that employ the *labor* of these animals. The phrase is elsewhere used as equivalent to *conduct*, *guidance*, *direction*. Thus, 2 Sam. 15. 17, 'And the king went forth, and all the people *after him*;' Heb. 'at his foot.' 2 Kings 3. 9, 'And there was no water for the host, and for the cattle *that followed them*;' Heb. 'at their feet.' So here, 'the Lord hath blessed thee at my foot;' i. e. under my guidance and management. 'By the labor of Jacob's *foot*;' the cattle of Laban had increased to a multitude. Of a man who has become rich by his own industry, it is said, 'Ah! by the labor of his *feet* these treasures have been acquired.' 'How have you gained this prosperity?' 'By the favor of the gods, and the labor of my *feet*.' 'How is it the king is so prosperous?' 'By the labor of the *feet* of his ministers.' *Roberts*.

31. *Shalt not give me any thing.* That is, no definite fixed amount, as Laban was minded to do. Jacob had in view another plan of proceeding.—¶ *If thou wilt do this thing for me, &c.* 'There is a difficulty in this passage which will not escape the notice of the careful

31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing. If thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock:

reader. The terms of the agreement were, that, in consideration of Jacob's services, Laban should allow to him all the sheep or goats of a certain description which should *thereafter* be born. The agreement refers to no present distribution of the flocks; yet we find Laban immediately selecting the animals of the description defined by Jacob, and sending them three days' journey distant from the others, under the charge of his sons. Perhaps the first impression of the reader would be, that Laban, for the greater security, placed with his sons the animals of the class (parti-colored) defined by Jacob, leaving with him those of one color, and that, from time to time an exchange was effected, the parti-colored in the one-colored flock of Laban, fed by Jacob, going to the parti-colored flock of Jacob, fed by Laban's sons; and the one-colored animals produced in Jacob's parti-colored flock, in charge of Laban's sons, being transferred to the flock in charge of Jacob. But this hypothesis assumes that Laban made over to Jacob in the first instance all the parti-colored animals in his flocks, whereas the agreement only states a prospective advantage. We have therefore no doubt that the solution offered by Dr. Adam Clarke is the most reasonable. He supposes that the separation was a stratagem of Laban, for the purpose of diminishing Jacob's chances as much as possible, by leaving him with a flock that did not contain a single animal of the sort to which he was to be entitled, and from which it might therefore be expected that the smallest possible proportion of parti-colored animals would proceed. The



32 I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and <sup>d</sup> of such shall be my hire.

33 So shall my \*righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 31. 8.

\* Ps. 37. 6.

counter-stratagem of Jacob, and its result, appear in the sequel of the chapter.' *Pict. Bible.*

32. *I will pass through all thy flock, &c.* 'Flock' here is a general term under which Jacob goes on to specify the two species of animals of which it was composed. The original for 'removing' (לָהֶסֶר *laser*) is a word of very doubtful construction in this place. Grammatically, it may refer either to Jacob or to Laban. In the former sense it is taken by the Syr. and Arab.; in the latter by the Gr., Chal., and Vulg. Probably it would be best, in translating, to leave it in its native ambiguity; 'Let me pass through all thy flocks to-day, (and) remove,' &c. By 'speckled' is meant those marked with small sprinklings, and by 'spotted,' those bearing spots of a larger size. The term 'cattle,' moreover, is applied in the Scriptures to sheep and goats, as well as to cows and oxen. —¶ *Of such shall be my hire.* It is all along to be borne in mind that this was a prospective arrangement. Jacob did not propose, by removing the parti-colored from the one-colored, now to appropriate one portion to himself and another to Laban; but the stipulation was thenceforth to take effect. All the brown and speckled which should thereafter be brought forth should belong to

34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

35 And he removed that day the he-goats that were ring-streaked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hands of his sons.

36 And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Jacob, and the rest to Laban; and it was so unlikely that the single-colored should produce many parti-colored, that Laban gladly embraces the proposal. But the event shows him to have been supplanted by the superior astuteness of Jacob.

33. *So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come.* Heb. בְּיוֹם מָחָר *beyom mahur*, in the day to-morrow, i. e. shortly hereafter, or in time to come. The clause might perhaps be more correctly rendered, 'So shall my righteousness answer for me before thee hereafter when thou shalt come upon my wages before thee;' i. e. shalt come to examine my portion of the flock, and to see that all is right. It is as if he had said, so shall my honest and upright conduct bear witness for me. The thing will show for itself that I am guilty of no fraud whatever, but simply take what you agree to give me. The original word for answer (אָנָה *anah*) is often rendered testify. Thus Is. 59. 12, 'Our sins testify against us.' He Answer against us. —¶ *Shall be counted stolen with me.* You shall count it to have been stolen by me.

34. *I would that it might be, &c.* Or Let it indeed be.

35. *All the brown among the sheep* As the original has the import of *heat*,

37 ¶ And <sup>r</sup> Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut-tree; and pilled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which *was* in the rods.

38 And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering-troughs when the flocks came to drink; that they should conceive when they came to drink.

39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted.

40 And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ring-streaked, and

<sup>r</sup> ch. 31. 9—12.

sultriness, *burning*, it is probable that by 'brown' here we are to understand *sun-burnt* or *black*. It is not known that any sheep are brown.

37. *And Jacob took him rods, &c.* Many have contended that this was a natural means sufficient for producing the effect; and it is an established fact, that any strong impression upon the mind of the female during the period of gestation has a corresponding influence upon the offspring. Even on this supposition Jacob cannot be considered as violating his contract, for he only used such means to produce variegated cattle as his knowledge of natural causes afforded him. But it is evident from ch. 31. 5—13, that there was something miraculous in it, and that in the means which he employed, he followed some divine intimation. If so, his conduct, so far from being culpable, was praiseworthy, as being a compliance with the will of God. He is, in fact, hereby acquitted of selfishness and every other improper motive, just as the divine command to the Israelites to borrow of the Egyptians acquits them of fraud. Both were extraordinary interpositions on behalf of the injured; a kind of divine re-

all the brown in the flock of Laban: and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

41 And it came to pass whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

42 But when the cattle were feeble, he put *them* not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

43 And the man <sup>s</sup> increased exceedingly, and <sup>h</sup> had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses.

<sup>s</sup> ver. 30.    <sup>h</sup> ch. 13. 2. & 24. 35. & 26. 13, 14.

prisal, in which justice was executed on a broad scale. 'They shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.' And as the Egyptians could not complain of the Israelites, inasmuch as they had freely lent, or rather given their jewels, without any expectation of receiving them again (see note on Ex. 9. 1—3); so neither could Laban complain of Jacob, for that he had nothing more than it was agreed he should have; nor was he, on the whole, injured, but greatly benefited by Jacob's devices. —  
¶ *Pilled*. Pealed. He took green rods of different trees, or shrubs, and peeled off the bark so as to make streaks of white in them, and then placed them in full view of the flocks at the times mentioned in the text, that the designed effect might take place. If unbelievers object to this as a crafty device originating with Jacob, we may answer, Let them make use of the same means, and see if the same results will follow. We presume it will not be pretended that any person has since made the experiment with success.

REMARKS. (1.) The jealousy and strife which took place in the tents of

## CHAP. XXXI.

AND he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath

Jacob, by reason of his many wives, may make us thankful that a practice, common amongst the people of God in early times, has been totally abolished by the gospel of Christ. It is one of the many instances in which the liberty wherewith we should be apt to indulge ourselves, would be far less conducive to our happiness, than that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. This lesson of gratitude is still more strongly enforced upon us by considering the effects of Jacob's marrying two sisters, who thenceforth seem to have lost all sisterly affection; envying each other, and trafficking with each other for the kind regards of their common husband. May we hence learn to feel thoroughly convinced, that the bounds which God sets to our desires are in all cases ordered for our good; and that whether we can see the reasonableness of his laws or not, it must be as much for our real interest, in every case, to refrain from that which he forbids, as to enjoy that which he allows.

(2) Though some of the names given by the sisters to their respective children have perpetuated the memory of their strife, yet in others they seem to have been piously designed to express their sense of the divine goodness. In this, their example may suggest to us a claim for our thankfulness too often forgotten upon the birth of those little ones whom God brings into the world. It may teach us to render our devout acknowledgments to him who thus setteth the solitary in families; and not only so, but it may hint the propriety of giving more scope to religious sentiments in the choice of names for our children than is common amongst many professing godliness. Why should not such names be selected as will not only remind us of

taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which *was* our father's hath he gotten all this <sup>a</sup> glory.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 49. 16.

what we owe to the father of mercies, but such also as will establish an important association in the minds of our children between their names and their duty? We are probably but little aware of the secret influence exerted upon the character from this source. The bestowing of the names of great military chieftains and heroes has no doubt tended to kindle up and keep alive the baneful spirit of war among men, and, in general, we could not well more effectually secure the transfusion of any one's spirit into another, than by giving him in infancy his name, and then rearing him up under the influences of all the associations which it carries with it. Let us then avail ourselves of this principle to a good end. Let us call our children after the good, rather than the great. Let us name them, not so much from our earthly relations as from our spiritual kindred, those whose names are written in the book of God, on purpose that we may follow their examples.

## CHAP. XXXI.

1. *And he heard, &c.* Not perhaps that he heard it directly from them, for they were three days' journey asunder; but it was reported to him; it came to his ears.—¶ *Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's.* The spirit which prompted this calumnious assertion was, no doubt, of the most malevolent character, and but for Jacob's timely removal, would probably have led to a violent seizure of all his possessions under the pretext of their belonging in equity to Laban. In this extremity God interferes for the protection of his servant.—¶ *Gotten all this glory.* Heb. עָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה *asah, made*, in the sense of *acquired, accumulated, amassed*, as explained in the note on Gen. 12. 5. Chal. 'Gotten all

2 And Jacob beheld <sup>b</sup> the countenance of Laban, and behold, it was not <sup>c</sup> toward him as before.

3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, <sup>d</sup> Return unto the land of thy fa-

<sup>b</sup> ch. 4. 5. <sup>c</sup> Deut. 28. 54. <sup>d</sup> ch. 28. 15, 20, 21. & 32. 9.

these riches.' The original for *glory* (כבוד *kabod*) properly signifies *weight* or *burden*, as Gen. 13. 2, where Abraham is said to have been 'very rich,' Heb. 'very weighty.' The word is rendered 'glory,' because glory and honor are the usual concomitants of riches. This sense of the term occurs Is. 61. 6, 'Ye shall eat the *riches* of the Gentiles, and (or, even) in their *glory* shall ye boast yourselves;' i. e. in their abundance, their opulence. Rev. 21. 24, 'And the kings of the earth do bring their *glory* and honor into it;' i. e. their riches. Mat. 4. 8, 'He sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the *glory* of them;' i. e. all their riches and treasures.

2. *Was not toward him as before.* Heb. כִּימֹל שִׁלְשֹׁם *kithmol shilshom*, as *yesterday (and) the day before*. 'This form of speech is truly oriental, and means time gone by. Has a person lost the friendship of another, he will say to him, 'Thy face is not to me as yesterday and the day before.' Is a man reduced in his circumstances, he says, 'The face of God is not upon me as *yesterday and the day before*.' The future is spoken of as *to-day and to-morrow*; 'His face will be upon me *to-day and to-morrow*,' which means, *always*. 'I will love thee *to-day and to-morrow*.' 'Do you think of me?'—'Yes, *to-day and to-morrow*.' 'Modeliar, have you heard that Tamban is trying to injure you?'—'Yes; and go and tell him that neither *to-day nor to-morrow* will he succeed.' Our Saviour says, 'Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures *to-day and to-morrow*.' Jacob said to Laban, 'My righteousness answers for me in time *to come*;' but the Hebrew has for this,

thers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

'*to-morrow*;' his righteousness would be perpetual. In eastern language, therefore, 'yesterday and the day before' signifies time *past*; but 'to-day and to-morrow,' time *to come*. See Ex. 13. 14. Jos. 4. 6, also 24. 22, margin.' Roberts.

3. *The Lord said unto Jacob, &c.* Had Jacob removed under the impulse of mere personal resentment, he might have sinned against God, though not against Laban. But when an express command came to him from Jehovah to return to the land of his fathers, with a promise that he would be with him, the path of duty was plain. In all our removals it becomes us so to act that we may hope for the divine presence and blessing to attend us; else, though we may flee from one trouble, we shall fall into many, and be less able to endure them.

4. *Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah, &c.* This is easily explained on the supposition, which eastern customs abundantly confirm, that while Laban and his daughters dwelt in a *house*, Jacob was now at some distance with his flocks abiding in *tents*. We know from ch. 30. 36, that Laban's flocks were in two parcels, one under the care of Jacob; the other committed to the care of Laban's 'sons, three days' journey off. Jacob's also were probably, for the same reason, removed to an equal distance. This, of course, made it necessary for him to send for his wives, a measure still more natural if we suppose it to have been at the sheep-shearing season, which was a time of feasting and special entertainment to relations and friends, who were invited to be present. Comp. Gen. 38. 12. 1

5 And said unto them, •I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before : but the God of my father <sup>f</sup> hath been with me.

6 And <sup>e</sup> ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

7 And your father hath deceived me, and <sup>h</sup> changed my wages <sup>i</sup> ten

<sup>e</sup> ver. 2. <sup>f</sup> ver. 3. <sup>g</sup> ver. 38, 39, 40, 41. ch. 30. 29. <sup>h</sup> ver. 41. <sup>i</sup> Numb. 14. 22. Neh. 4. 12. Job 19. 3. Zech. 8. 23

Sam. 25. 4, 8, 36. 2 Sam. 13. 25. Bp. Patrick's explanation of the circumstance, that it was for greater secrecy, and perhaps to avoid the danger of being seized upon by Laban and his sons, is far less plausible. Could not a husband speak to his wives with sufficient privacy in Laban's house? Were matters come to such an extremity that Jacob durst not venture himself within the doors of his uncle's house, for fear of being seized upon and made a prisoner? In fact, Jacob seems actually to have communicated his intention to Rachel in her father's house; for when he sent for his wives, she brought her father's teraphim with her, which she would by no means have done had she been unapprised of his design.

5. *I see your father's countenance, that it is not, &c.* Had Laban's sons only murmured, Jacob might have borne it; but their father partook of their disaffection, as was palpably evident by his altered demeanor. It is wisely ordered that the countenance shall, in most cases, be an index to the heart; else there would be much more deception in the world than there is. We gather more of men's dispositions towards us from looks than from words; and domestic happiness is more influenced by the one than the other. Sullen silence is often less tolerable than contention itself, because the latter, painful as it is, affords opportunity for mutual explanation. But while Jacob had to com-

times: but God <sup>k</sup> suffered him not to hurt me.

8 If he said thus, <sup>l</sup> The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-streaked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-streaked.

9 Thus God hath <sup>m</sup> taken away

<sup>k</sup> ch. 20. 6. Ps. 105. 14. <sup>l</sup> ch. 30. 32. <sup>m</sup> ver. 1, 16.

plain of Laban's cloudy countenance, he could add, 'The God of my father has been with me;' or, as the Chal. has it, 'The Word of the God of my father has been for my help;' thus bearing witness to his integrity; for had he done wrong, he would not have been thus blessed. The smiles of God are the best supports under the frowns of men. If we walk in the light of *his* countenance, we need not fear what man can do unto us.

7. *Your father hath deceived me.* Heb. <sup>נִתְּנָה</sup> *hethel*. This word, in Judg. 16. 10, is rendered *mocked*; in Ex. 8. 29, *deal deceitfully*, and by the Chal. is here rendered *hath lied unto me*. It properly denotes all these.—¶ *Changed my wages ten times.* That is, many times; a definite number for an indefinite, according to a common usage of the original. Thus, Num. 14. 22. 'Ye have tempted me these *ten times*,' i. e. many times. Job 19. 3, 'These ten times have ye reproached me,' i. e. in repeated instances; again and again. In like manner, Lev. 26. 26, 'Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven.' Eccl. 7. 19, 'Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than *ten* mighty men the city.' Zech. 8. 23, 'In those days—*ten* men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew. Rev. 2. 10, 'Ye shall have tribulation *ten* days.'—¶ *Suffered him not.* Heb. <sup>נִתְּנָה</sup> *nethano*, gave him not. See the idiom explained Gen. 20. 6.

9, 10. *Thus God hath taken away, &c*

the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ring-streaked, speckled, and grizzled.

11 And <sup>a</sup> the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lift up now thine

<sup>a</sup> ch. 48. 16.

These words contain a clear vindication of Jacob from the charge brought against him by Laban's sons, v. 1, of having despoiled their father of his wealth. In whatever form his wages were to be paid to him, God, and not he, had so ordered the course of things, that it should turn to his advantage, and this he would piously and gratefully acknowledge. To this assertion of the patriarch the sentiments of his wives, as they express themselves, v. 16, most cordially respond.

10. *Saw in a dream.* It was doubtless in this way that the expedient described in the preceding chapter was suggested to the mind of Jacob.—¶ *Grizzled.* Heb. בִּרְדִּים *beruddim*, from the verb בָּרַד *barad*, to strew, scatter, sprinkle, and hence to hail. Indeed, our word *grizzled* comes from the old French *gresle*, hail, now written *grêle*. The import of the epithet therefore here is *hail-spotted*, or marked with rather large white spots, like hail-stones on a dark ground. It differs from נִקְרָדִים *nekuddim*, speckled, occurring in the same connexion, only by indicating spots of a larger size. This was the color of the horses seen in the fourth chariot in Zechariah's vision, Zech. 6. 3, bay mottled with white.

11. *The angel of God spake unto me in a dream.* It is somewhat doubtful whether this and the dream mentioned v. 10, were one and the same. That

eyes and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ring-streaked, speckled, and grizzled: for <sup>o</sup> I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

13 I am the God of Beth-el, <sup>p</sup> where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now <sup>q</sup> arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

<sup>o</sup> Exod. 3. 7. <sup>p</sup> ch. 28. 18, 19, 20.

<sup>q</sup> ver. 3. ch. 32. 9.

they were so, appears on the whole most probable, and if we render v. 11, 'For the angel of God spake unto me,' &c. the words contained in vv. 12, 13, become merely a more expanded statement of the particulars of the dream briefly alluded to in v. 10. Not having previously mentioned it to his wives, he here takes occasion, in order to confirm them still more in the belief that he was under special divine direction in the contemplated removal, to recite it in fuller detail. The words uttered by the angel are very remarkable. 'I am the God of Beth-el.' It is scarcely conceivable that such language should ever have proceeded from the lips of a created being. Indeed, the evidence of the supreme divinity of the speaker here is the same with that which meets us in the account of similar apparitions already considered, Gen. 16. 7.—22. 11. It is therefore unnecessary to dwell upon it here.

13. *Where thou anointedst the pillar.* This was a clear intimation, if any such were needed, that God had accepted the services of Jacob, performed at Beth-el. But in directing his thoughts to the vision at Bethel, the Lord reminds his servant of those solemn acts by which he had at that time devoted himself to him. It is not only necessary for our support in trouble that we should remember the promises of God to us, but our solemn engagements also to him.

14 And Rachel and Leah answered, and said unto him, <sup>r</sup> *Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?*

15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for <sup>s</sup> he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then,

<sup>r</sup> ch. 2. 24.    <sup>s</sup> ch. 29. 15, 27.

It is thus that the same devout and joyful affections which distinguished the happiest seasons of our lives will be kindled afresh, and in all our movements we shall more distinctly keep in view the end for which we live.

14. *Is there yet any portion or inheritance?* Implied that they had no hope of deriving any farther benefit from their relation to such a father, and consequently no motive for remaining longer with him. By 'portion,' is to be understood such voluntary gifts and presents as he might be induced to make to them, and by 'inheritance,' that to which they might expect to succeed by law or common usage.

15. *Hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.* Instead of dealing with us as daughters, disposing of us with honorable dowries, he has bargained us away like slaves, and applied the proceeds to his own use, instead of bestowing any portion of it upon us.

—<sup>¶</sup> *Devoured our money.* Heb. כִּסְפֵּנוּ *kaspenu*, our silver; i. e. the price, the equivalent, for which we were sold. The 'selling' to which they allude, was Laban's compact with Jacob for fourteen years' service. As this service was in lieu of a dowry, which would naturally have accrued to the wives as a right, they jointly complain of being excluded from all participation in the avails of it. Their crimination of their father is not to be reckoned a breach of filial reverence, for they are not traducing him in the presence of strangers,

whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

17 <sup>¶</sup> Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram; for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

but merely stating the reason which justified them to their own consciences in leaving him.

17, 18. *Then Jacob rose up, &c.* The result showed that Jacob acted prudently in taking his departure without the knowledge of Laban. Had he known it, there is every reason to believe he would either have detained him by force, or deprived him of a part of his property.—A very interesting part of Oriental usages consists in the different forms of travelling and migration, in which little alteration seems to have taken place since the most early times, the usages of which are briefly indicated in the book of Genesis. It is impossible for one who is acquainted with the Bible to witness the migration of a nomadic tribe, whether Arabian or Tartar, without being forcibly reminded of this journey of Jacob, and the various removals of his grandfather and father. The degree of change probably extends little further than to the more warlike character which the tribes now assume in their journeys, arising from the increase of population, and from the extension of the aggressive principle among the children of the deserts. We have already mentioned the expedition with which the people in the East prepare for an entire removal (see note on chap. 14. 10.) In a quarter of the time which it would take a poor family in England to get the furniture of a single room ready for removal, the tents of a large encampment will have been struck, and, together

with all the moveables and provisions, packed away upon the backs of camels, mules, or asses; and the whole party will be on its way, leaving, to use an expression of their own, not a halter or a rag behind. The order of march in the removal of a pastoral tribe or family seems to be much the same as that which may be traced in the next and ensuing chapter. When the number of animals is considerable, they are kept in separate flocks and droves, under the charge of shepherds and herdmen, or of the young men and women of the tribe, who hurry actively about, often assisted by dogs, to restrain the larger and more lively animals from straying too far. The very young or newly-born lambs and kids are carried either under the arms of the young people, or in baskets or panniers thrown across the backs of camels. To this custom of carrying the lambs in the arms of the shepherds, as well as to the necessity mentioned by Jacob (chap. 33. 13.) of driving slowly when the sheep are with young, there is a beautiful allusion in Isaiah, chap. 40. 11; 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' The sheep and goats generally lead the van, and are followed by the camels, and perhaps asses, laden more or less with the property of the community: consisting of the tents, with their cordage, mats, carpets, clothes, skins, water and provision-bags, boilers, and pots, and sundry other utensils, bundled up in admirable confusion, unless when all the property belongs to one person, as in the case of Jacob. The laden beasts are usually followed by the elderly men, the women, and the children, who are mostly on foot in the ordinary migrations with the flocks; which must be carefully distinguished from a caravan journey, or a predatory excursion across the deserts. The very young children are carried on the backs

or in the arms of their mothers, who in general are on foot, but are sometimes mounted, with their infants, on the spare or lightly-laden beasts. The sick and very aged persons are similarly mounted; and the children old enough to take some care of themselves, but not to go on foot, or perhaps to speak, are either carried on the backs of the young men or women, or set upon the top of the baggage on the beasts of burden, and left there to shift for themselves. The little creatures cling to their seats, and seldom require or receive much attention. The middle-aged men, well armed and ready for action, march steadily along by the flanks of the column, controlling and directing its general progress; while the younger people attend to the details. The chief himself brings up the rear, accompanied by the principal persons of the party. He is generally on horseback, however the rest may be circumstanced. Sometimes, when the tribe is wealthy, a great proportion of the people may be mounted in some way or other; and the men, armed with lances, ride about to bring up the march of the cattle; but, as a general thing, we may say that the mass of the people perform such migrations on foot. A day's stage, with numerous flocks, is necessarily short, and the pace easy; and must not be confounded with a day's journey by the caravan. It would seem as if most of Jacob's people went on foot. It is only said that he set his wives and children upon camels: and in chap. 33. 14, where the phrase which the text gives is, 'I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth *before me*, and the children are able to endure,'—the margin more literally renders, 'According to the *foot* of the work, according to the *foot* of the children.' *Pict. Bible.*—¶ *Carried away all his cattle.* Heb. יִנְחָג *yinhag*, led, drove, or conducted away.—¶ *Cattle of his getting.* Or, Heb. קִינְיָנו *kinyano*, of his possessing.



19 And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stol-

en the 'images that were her father's.

† ch. 35. 2.

19 *And Laban went—and Rachel had stolen.* Rather, 'For Laban had gone—and Rachel stole,' as several of the ancient versions read it. His absence gave Rachel the opportunity of possessing herself of the images. It is impossible to speak with confidence of the motives by which Rachel was actuated in this transaction. Among the many solutions which have been attempted of her conduct, the following may be specified. (1) That the images were of precious metal, and Rachel stole them, to compensate for the loss of dowry sustained through Laban's bargain with Jacob. (2) That she thought that by taking the oracles, she should deprive Laban of the means of discovering the flight of her husband. (3) That she expected by this act to bring prosperity from the household of her father to her husband. (4) Some conclude that she hoped to cure her father of his idolatrous propensities by depriving him of the instruments; while many, on the other hand, imagine that Rachel and her sister were infected by the same superstitions as their father, and wished to continue the practice of them in the land of Canaan. This last supposition is not very easily reconciled with what we are led to infer respecting the character of these women in the foregoing narrative. They were both, on the birth of their children, apparently so full of devout acknowledgments to the Most High, as the author of their mercies, that we were constrained to entertain a hope of their piety. Nor ought, perhaps, the clandestine abduction of the images to forfeit for them our good opinion on the whole; although, if her object was, as some suppose, by a pious theft, to remove from her father a prominent occasion of sin, it is not easy to see why she should not have

cast them into the Euphrates as he crossed it, or at least have informed Jacob, after their departure, of what she had done. For this reason her conduct appears questionable. In fact, the more we ponder the story, the greater are our misgivings as to the purity of her motives. But whatever they were, it is clear that these images afterwards proved a snare to Jacob's family; for we are informed, ch. 35. 1—3, that he could not go up to Bethel till he had cleansed his house of them. The probability, we think, is, that the family of Laban, though possessed of some knowledge of the true God, was yet in a measure tinctured with some remains of the idolatry and superstition of the surrounding countries, and afforded a specimen of that mixed and mongrel worship which is elsewhere expressed, Zeph. 1. 5, by 'swearing by the Lord and by Malcham,' equivalent to aiming to serve God and mammon at the same time. The human heart is sadly prone to idolatry, and even when in possession of some knowledge of God is ever mixing up with his the worship of other strange gods. We see this, if we mistake not, here among the descendants of Nahor, the near relatives of Abraham; we see it in the images of the Romish church; we see it in many who set up their idols in their hearts, if not in their houses, who worship the creature more than the Creator, who make gods of their riches, their pleasures, their lusts. But the irrevocable commandment of the Almighty is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me.'—† *Teraphim*. Heb. תְּרָפִים *teraphim*. Gr. εἰδωλα, *idols*. Chal. Arab., and Syr. 'Images.' Josephus, 'Types of gods.' The etymology, and consequently the exact signification of the word, is doubtful. Of the various conjectures respecting its origin, the

following appear to rest upon the most plausible grounds: (1.) That it is derived from the Syriac 'Teraph,' to *inquire*, from their being consulted and inquired of as oracles, Ezek. 21. 21; Zech. 10. 2. (2.) That it is formed by a common change of the letters *T* and *S* from *Seraphim*, the same as Cherubim, from which the original hint of them is supposed to be taken; or, (3.) That, as Jarieu suggests, it comes from רפא *rapha*, to *heal or cure*, whence, by adding formative letters תרפא *teraphim*, *divi sanatores, gods that can cure or heal*. This is supposed to be confirmed by the fact that the Teraphim are called in the Gr. of Judg. 17. 5, *θεραφεῖν theraphein*, to which, it is conjectured, we are to trace the origin of the word *θεραπεύω therapewo*, to *heal*, from these idols being consulted, and thus, in a sense, worshipped, by their votaries, with a view, among other things, to the obtainment of health, healing, and the general prosperity of the households to which they pertained. But, leaving the question of the etymology of the term undecided, we remark that the Teraphim are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. They seem to have been images—sometimes very small and sometimes large—apparently in the human figure, or at least with a human head; and the Jewish writers say that they were placed in niches, with lamps burning before them. 'From the passages of Scripture in which they are mentioned, it would seem that they were not idols in the worst sense of the word, no primary worship being rendered to them. They were certainly used by persons who had professed the worship of the true God; but as they proved a snare to take away the heart from Him, and to divide or supersede that exclusive confidence and trust which he required, we find them denounced by the prophets; and they were doubtless included in the general interdiction of images by the law of

Moses. No doubt they often became objects of positively idolatrous homage; but in their general use, before and after the deliverance of the law, they seem to have been popularly considered as not being incompatible with the allegiance due to Jehovah; and there are instances in which we find teraphim connected, in some way or other, with the family and public worship rendered to Him. So far as this matter can be understood, it seems to us that these images were considered to fix a protecting and guiding presence to the places in which they were set—protecting, perhaps, as an Oriental talisman is considered to protect; and guiding as an oracle, which in some way or other was considered to indicate the course that ought to be pursued on occasions of doubt and difficulty. Thus the Danites desired the Levite, who had charge of Micah's teraphim, to ask counsel for them, and he gave them a response as from the Lord (Judges 18. 5, 6.) The prophets also mention them as oracles. Ezekiel (chap. 21. 21.) describes the king of Babylon as using divination—consulting with teraphim; and Zechariah (chap. 10. 1.) tells the Jews that their teraphim 'have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie.' Our translation sometimes retains the original word, and at other times renders it 'images' or 'idols.' The Seventy have generally rendered the word by 'oracles' (ὁράων and ἀποθεγγόμενοι); but in Sam. 16. 13, 16, they have κενόταφια, as if they thought that the *teraphim* there meant images placed as sepulchral monuments. Some, however, render this Greek word by 'vain figures.' *Pict. Bible*. The 'Teraphim' may be defined *divining images*, and there can be little doubt that they were regarded as a kind of *Penates, Lares*, or *household gods*, as Laban himself virtually terms them, v. 30. They appear to have been employed in false worship for a purpose similar to that of the *Ephod* and

20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

21 So he fled with all that he

had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and <sup>u</sup> set his face toward the mount Gilead.

<sup>u</sup> ch. 46. 28. 2 Kings 12. 17. Luke 9. 51, 53

the true. Accordingly the prophet Hosea, ch. 3, 4, in a prediction of the future desolate condition of the Jews, says, 'They shall be without an image, and without an ephod, and without *teraphim*,' or as it should probably be rendered, 'without an ephod, *even* teraphim;' the word 'without' not occurring in the original; as if in their degenerate state the Ephod were in God's sight no better than the Teraphim. The drift of the passage is to predict that they should be reduced to such extremities, that they should neither have the implements of the worship of the true God nor of idols. For a fuller account of the Teraphim, see 'Jurieu's Critical Hist. of Doct. and Wor. of the Church,' vol. ii. p. 77.

20. *Jacob stole away unawares to Laban.* Heb. יִגְנוֹב אֶת לֵב יִגְנוֹב *yignob eth leb*, stole away the heart, a Hebraism for departing without the consent or privy of Laban. Gr. ἐκρυψε τον Λαβαν, *hid* (i. e. covertly eluded) Laban. Chal. 'Jacob concealed it from Laban.' To 'steal the heart,' in the original idiom, is to conduct or demean one's self in such a way as to create a false impression as to a matter of fact. Thus Absalom 'stole the hearts of the men of Israel,' 2 Sam. 15. 6, by so framing his conduct as to produce the impression of his being at once a dutiful son and a loyal subject, while he was at the same time plotting the overthrow of the government at the hazard of his father's life. So Jacob 'stole the heart of Laban' by acting as if he had no other design but of remaining with him, while he was, in fact, making arrangements for a clandestine departure. In like manner we find in Homer, Il. 14. 217, κλέπτειν νοον, *to steal the mind*, i. e. *to mislead, to deceive*,

*to impose upon.*—¶ *Laban the Syrian*

But what necessity was there of here mentioning his country? Was not this already sufficiently known? We incline to the belief that there is in the original a designed play upon words, which affords the only clue to the use of the epithet in this place. The Heb. for Syrian is אֲרָמִי *arammi*, *Aramite*, and it so happens that the Heb. term for *cunning, crafty, wily*, is עָרָם *aram*, differing but little in its letters, and still less in sound; so that the import would be that Jacob (the supplanter) had, in thus secretly stealing away, outwitted his *scheming* kinsman, whatever may have been his previous stratagems for detaining him. —¶ *In that he told him not.* Or, impersonally, in that no one told him; in that it came not at all to his ears.

21. *Passed over the river.* The river Euphrates, lying between Mesopotamia and Canaan; so called by way of distinction. —¶ *Set his face.* That is, directed his course with the full bent of his soul; going forward with the most determined purpose. Accordingly it is rendered in the Gr. *ωρμησθε*, implying *an earnest and violent running or rushing forward*. It is equivalent to the expression, Luke 9. 51, 'He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem;' so also Jer. 50. 5, 'They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward;' i. e. fully resolved to go. —¶ *The Mount Gilead.* The mountainous regions of Gilead; 'mount' being used as a collect. sing. for 'mountains.' The range is so called here prophetically, as the name was first given by Jacob himself (v. 4.) to the round heap of stones, and it was ultimately extended to the adjoining mountains and district. Mount Gilead is properly a chain of mountains, forming part of the exten-

22 And it was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob was fled.

23 And he took \* his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey : and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

\* ch. 13. 8.

sive ridge which, under various names extends north and south, and forms the eastern boundary of Canaan, towards Arabia Petrea. It is situated on the east side of the Jordan, and stretches from Hermon, one of the highest peaks of Lebanon or Libanus, on the north, to Arabia Petrea on the south. The northern part of it, known by the name of Bashan was celebrated for its stately oaks and numerous herds of cattle pastured there, to which there are many allusions in the Scriptures. The scenery of this elevated tract is described by Mr. Buckingham as exceedingly beautiful ; its plains covered with a fertile soil, its hills clothed with forests, and at every new turn presenting the most beautiful landscapes that can be imagined. The middle part, in a stricter sense, was termed Gilead ; and in the southern parts, beyond Jordan, were the mountains of Abarim. The most eminent among these are Pisgah and Nebo, which form a continued chain, and command a view of the whole land of Canaan. From Mount Nebo Moses surveyed the promised land before he was gathered to his fathers. This flight of Jacob occurred A. M. 2266, 610 years after the flood, in the 153th year of Isaac's age, and the 98th of Jacob's.

22, 23. *It was told Laban on the third day.* He heard of it no earlier on account of the distance that intervened between his flocks and Jacob's, as we learn from comparing ch. 30. 36, with ch. 31. 19. But no sooner does he hear of his son-in-law's abrupt departure, than he collects a sufficient force from among his kinsmen and adherents, and sets out in hot pursuit of him. It is easy

24 And God † came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou ‡ speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

† ch. 20. 3. Job 33. 15. Matt. 1. 20.

‡ ch. 24. 50.

to see from this with what reception a formal request or proposal to be dismissed from his service that he might return to Canaan, would have met at the hand of Laban. The patriarch was no doubt fully satisfied in his own mind that he must leave his employer clandestinely if he left him at all.

24. *God came to Laban in a dream by night.* Not that there was any *personal manifestation* of the Deity to Laban, but he was visited by a *supernatural dream* ; a dream in which it was in some way mysteriously impressed upon his spirit that he must offer no harm to Jacob. Such communications were anciently made to men independent of their moral character. The divine influence, which makes known the will of God, or the coming events of his providence is entirely different from that which is put forth in the renewal of men's characters and making them heirs of eternal life. Accordingly, we find such men as Abimelech, Laban, Balaam, and Nebuchadnezzar made, on particular occasions and for particular purposes, the recipients of divine revelations. But the gift of prophecy is of infinitely less value than the saving graces of the Holy Spirit.—¶ *Speak not to Jacob either good or bad.* Heb. מְטוֹב עַד רָע *muttoḇ ad raa*, from good to bad. The sequel shows that this could not have been intended, as the letter of the text would seem to indicate, as a prohibition against saying any thing at all to Jacob. It is probably to be understood in a restricted sense, that is, in reference to the special design with which he had pursued his kinsman. He was not to attempt, either by enticing words or by

25 ¶ Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and

\*carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

27 Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

\* 1 Sam. 30. 2.

rough usage or threats, to prevail upon Jacob to desist from his present journey, and return to Syria. Some, however, propose to adhere to the literal rendering, and to interpret it as a warning to Laban *not to change from a friendly tone of address to a harsh menacing one*; q. d. do not begin with 'Peace be unto thee,' and then proceed to injurious language or acts of violence. Whether this be the true construction or not, the sense it gives is rather confirmed by several of the versions. Gr. *μη ποτε λαλησης μεσα Ιακοβ πονηρα* *lest in any way thou speak evil with Jacob*. Vulg. *Cave ne quidquam aspere loquaris contra Jacob, take heed that thou speak not any thing harshly against Jacob*. Coverd. 'Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob aught save good.' Germ. Vers. of Luth. 'Watch thyself that thou speak with Jacob no otherwise than friendly.'

26. *What hast thou done that, &c.* Thus evincing the truth of the remark, that those whose own conduct is the most flagrantly unjust and oppressive, are often the most ready to interrogate sharply the doings of others.—¶ *Stolen away unawares to me*. Heb. *תגבב את לבבי* *tignob eth lebabi, stolen away my heart*. See above, on v. 20.—¶ *As captives taken with the sword*, Heb. *כשבירות חרב* *kishbuyoth hareb, as captives of the sword*; i. e. as captives or prisoners taken and carried away by a predatory band. But the assertion was entirely false, as they had gone voluntarily with Jacob, and as they belonged to Jacob, why should they not have gone with him?

27. *That I might have sent thee with*

*mirth, &c.* 'The Easterns used to set out, at least on their long journeys, with music. When the prefetto of Egypt was preparing for his journey, he complained of his being incommoded by the songs of his friends, who in this manner took leave of their relations and acquaintance. These valedictory songs were often extemporary. If we consider them, as they probably were, used not on common but more solemn occasions, there appears peculiar propriety in the complaint of Laban.' Harmer. —¶ *With tabret*. Heb. *תוף* *toph*. An instrument of music, otherwise termed a *timbrel*. It is supposed to have resembled very nearly the tambourine of modern days. A skin is stretched over a rim like the end of a drum; around the rim are hung little bells, and the player strikes the skin with the knuckles of one hand, and shakes it with the other. It was used, in ancient times, chiefly by women. 'The original word seems to stand generally for all instruments of the drum kind. The word 'drum,' however, occurs nowhere in our translation, the Hebrew word being always rendered either 'tabret' or 'timbrel.' The *toph* seems to have been much used in civil and religious rejoicings, and is often mentioned as being beaten by women. Thus, after the passage of the Red Sea, Miriam, the sister of Moses, took a timbrel, and began to play and dance with the women (Exod. 15. 20.); and when Jephtha returned to his home after his victory over the Ammonites, his daughter came forth to meet him with timbrels and dances (Judges 11

28 And hast not suffered me <sup>b</sup> to kiss my sons, and my daughters ?  
<sup>c</sup> thou hast now done foolishly in so doing.

29 It is in the power of my hand

<sup>b</sup> ver. 55. Ruth 1. 9, 14. 1 Kings 19. 20.  
 Acts 20. 37. <sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. 13. 13. 2 Chron. 16. 9.

34). Our well-known instrument, the tambourine, so nearly resembles the Oriental timbrel, from which it is copied, as to render any particular description unnecessary. This instrument continues to be much used in the East, and occupies a conspicuous place in all musical entertainments. It invariably accompanies a dance. Dancing and the use of the timbrel are almost the only accomplishments which a lady acquires. The female slaves dance to its sound before their mistress, who has almost invariably at hand in her apartment a tambourine, which she takes up and plays many times in the course of a day.' *Pict. Bible*.

28. *My sons and my daughters*. By his 'sons,' Laban here means his grandsons, the sons of his daughters and of Jacob. We shall find many instances in which the term 'son' is applied to grandsons. Thus Laban himself is called (chap. 29. 5,) the son of Nahor, who was, in fact, his grandfather; and Me-phibosheth is in the same way called the son of his grandfather Saul (2 Sam. 59. 24.). Throughout his address Laban means to insinuate that Jacob had no cause to leave him on account of any thing *he* had done; that where there was so much secrecy, there must be something dishonorable; and that in pursuing him he was moved only by affection for his children. But his words are obviously full of hypocrisy and cant. However he may talk about his regard to his children and grand-children, that which lay nearest his heart was the substance which Jacob had taken with him, and which he no doubt meant in some way to recover. But he acts the part

to do you hurt : but the <sup>d</sup> God of your father spake unto me • yesternight, saying, 'Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

<sup>d</sup> ver. 53. ch. 28. 13. • ver. 24.

of thousands, who, when galled by an evil conscience, endeavor to ease themselves of its reproaches by transferring the blame from themselves to the persons they have wronged. He reproaches Jacob with a conduct which he well knew had resulted entirely from his own harshness and severity ; and with the utmost self-complaisance talks of the liberal and generous things which he *intended* to have done, after the call and occasion are over, and when his generosity is in no danger of being put to the test.

29. *It is in the power of my hand, &c.* Or perhaps more correctly, 'It was in the power of my hand.' The reader of the original will notice that the pronoun for 'you,' is here in the plural number, as also that which immediately follows, 'the God of *your* father'—אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיכֶם *abikem your father*, implying him and his party, instead of אֲבִיךָ *abika, thy father*, conveying the idea of a single individual. This cannot well be expressed in English without a circumlocution.—The progress of the story makes it evident that truth will usually in the end make itself to appear, whatever may have been the disguises in which it was wrapped. Laban here virtually acknowledges the violent purpose with which he had undertaken the pursuit ; but in the same breath he would fain make a merit of abstaining from the harm which he meditated. As his company was no doubt more powerful than that of Jacob, he would impress upon him the idea that his forbearance was the effect of generosity, and that he had, in fact, acted very religiously in paying so much deference to the warring voice

30 And now, *though* thou wouldst needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house; *yet* wherefore hast thou 'stolen my gods'?

31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou would-

r ver. 19. Judg. 18. 24.

of Jacob's God, as though he were a Deity different from the God of his own father, and one whom he might exercise his pleasure about serving. Thus do men sometimes vainly magnify as a virtue that which is imposed upon them through sheer necessity.

30 *Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?* We can figure to ourselves Jacob's surprise at hearing this charge. If there was any thing about Laban's house more odious and contemptible in the patriarch's eyes than another, it was his Teraphim. Had he supposed such an abomination to have been mixed with his goods, he would, no doubt, have looked upon it as corrupting the whole. While, therefore, it was cutting to his feelings to be accused of theft, it was doubly so to be accused of having stolen that which he abhorred. In these circumstances his defence, as might be expected from one who felt himself wronged, is, with the exception of the first charge, manly and spirited, perhaps to a degree bordering upon undue resentment.

31. *Because I was afraid.* This was Jacob's reply to the first part of Laban's address, v. 26—28, in which he expostulates with him for leaving him at all. By saying nothing to justify the fear which he had entertained, and dwelling wholly on the fact, he leaves Laban to infer, if he pleases, that his conduct in fleeing was liable to some exception; holding it sufficient to vindicate himself from the charge of having *unfeelingly* taken his departure. As to the question of *right* in the case, that he leaves unre-

est take by force thy daughters from me.

32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, *let him not live*: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee: for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

ε ch. 44. 9.

solved; herein, says Calvin, affording a hint to the children of God, not to be over-anxious in the matter of repelling false and slanderous aspersions cast upon their character or conduct. Having turned aside the weight, the *gravamen*, of a calumnious charge, we may safely wave an argumentative rebutting of the minor items.

32. *With whomsoever thou findest thy gods let him not live.* Here, in reply to the second head of Laban's charge, Jacob, as might be expected, speaks in language expressive of the strongest indignation. Indeed, we do not know that he can be acquitted of the charge of giving way to a culpable precipitancy of speech. Unless he had been as well assured of the innocence of all about him as he was of his own, we see not how such a severe imprecation is to be excused. Good men are often too confident of the goodness of those connected with them. Without deigning even to disown the charge, he at once pronounces the doom of death against the individual, with whom, upon strict search, the idols should be found. At least such is the drift of his reply, according to the construction put upon it by our own and several other versions. But the original admits of a somewhat different reading if a slight change be made in the punctuation. By putting the pause after 'brethren,' instead of after 'live,' a milder and, we think, a more probable sense is assigned to the words,—*Let him not live before his brethren;* i. e. let him be banished from the presence of his brethren; let him not pitch his tent

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants' tents; but he found *them* not. Then went he

out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the cam-

among theirs; let him henceforth be regarded as a worthless outlaw from their society. Thus, when Abraham prayed for his son: 'O that Ishmael might *live before thee*;' the import of the petition doubtless was, that he might live in the enjoyment of those privileges which pertained to the people who walked and worshipped *before God*; who were favored with the tokens of his peculiar presence. According to the present translation, not only does the punishment denounced seem wholly disproportioned to the crime, but it would apparently compel us to believe that the power of life and death, or the right of inflicting capital punishment, was lodged in the hands of private families, which may well be doubted. On the whole, therefore, as the original will allow of either, we prefer the latter mode of interpretation, especially as we find it confirmed by most of the versions. Gr. *οὐ ζήσεται ἐναντίον των ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν*, *he shall not live before our brethren*. Syr., Sam., Arab. the same. Vulg. *Necetur coram fratribus nostris, let him be slain before our brethren*. This, however, shows the *connexion* rather than the exact *sense* of the words. The same may be said of Coverdale's version; 'Let the same die here before our brethren.'

34. *Rachel had taken the images, &c.* 'Ladies and sick persons sometimes ride in a sort of covered chair or cradle thrown across the back of the camel, like panniers one on each side. Professor Paxton, in his excellent 'Illustrations of Scripture,' thinks that Rachel hid her father's teraphim in such a cradle, in which she had ridden during the day. But it is said that she also sat upon them in the tent; and these cradles are never used for seats except

while actually riding, and so singular a circumstance as Rachel's sitting upon them would alone have sufficed to have attracted Laban's suspicion. On the other hand, the common pack-saddle of the camel, as we have already mentioned (note to chap. 25. 27), is peculiarly appropriated to the purpose of a seat, or rather of a cushion, against which a person seated on the floor may lean. These saddles, which are made of wood, are high, and the concavity usually filled by the back of the camel would have formed an excellent hiding-place for such images as the teraphim. If this does not seem reasonable, we may take the alternative of supposing that Rachel hid the images under the *hesár*, which consists of things (carpets, cloaks, cloths, &c.,) heaped upon the pack-saddle to form a comfortable seat for ladies, who do not use the hamper or cradle. These things are always taken off at the end of a day's journey, and being laid on the ground, serve as a sort of mattress in the tent, on which a person may sit or lie down while he reclines against the pack-saddle itself. Rachel might easily conceal the images thus; and there is one reason which perhaps makes it most probable that she did so; and that is, that it is not customary to take off the pack-saddle at the end of a day's journey, but always to remove the *hesár* by which the saddle had been covered. Boothroyd renders the text 'camel's pillion.' *Pict. Bible*.—† *Searched*. Heb. *יִמַּשׁ שֶׁשֶׁשׁ* *yemash-shesh, felt by handling*. His going into and searching Jacob's and the women's tents, after his solemn asseveration of his innocence and ignorance in respect to the missing gods, shows how little confidence he had in his veracity.



el's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not.

35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot <sup>h</sup> rise up before thee; for the custom of women *is* upon me. And

<sup>h</sup> Exod. 20. 12. Lev. 19. 32.

35. *Let it not displease my lord, &c.* 'This apology was very necessary according to existing usages and feelings in the East, which inculcate the greatest external deference on the part of the children towards their parents. This is particularly the case in Persia, and appears always to have been so. In Quintus Curtius, Alexander is represented as saying to the Queen-mother of Persia, 'Understanding that it is in Persia considered a great offence for a son to be seated in the presence of his mother, unless by her permission, I have always in my visits to you remained standing till you authorized me to sit.' In their respective 'Travels in Persia,' both Sir William Ouseley and Mr. Moor mention that at an entertainment given to the English ambassador by the Ameen-ad-Dowlah (second vizier), all the persons of distinction at Ispahan joined them at dinner, except the governor of the city, Abdallah Khan, a person scarcely inferior to the minister in wealth and rank, and about thirty years of age. But the minister was his father; and therefore, instead of occupying his proper place among the guests, he stood humbly in the court-yard with the servants; for a son never sits before his father on anything like a public occasion, whatever be his dignity or power. Even the king's eldest son always stands in his presence, and is only regarded as the first of his servants. Daughters occupy a still humbler place. Strong external indications of respect are also shown to parents among the Bedouin Arabs. Boys never eat out of the same dish, or even in the presence

he searched, but found not the images.

36 ¶ And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered, and said to Laban, What *is* my trespass? what *is* my sin that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

of their father. Burckhardt says that it would be reckoned scandalous were any one to say, 'Look at that boy; he satisfied his appetite in the presence of his father.' The youngest male children, not more than four or five years of age, are, however, often invited to eat by the side of their father.' *Pict. Bible*. Although we are not warranted in saying that the reason here alleged by Rachel was fictitious, yet it is certain that our confidence in her sincerity will be weakened just in proportion as we believe her to have been influenced by wrong motives in abstracting the Teraphim. One who could secretly cherish a vile idolatry would no doubt be capable of prevarication.

36. *Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban.* Heb. יָרֵב *yareb, pleaded, strove, or disputed with*; a term mostly applied to judicial or forensic proceedings, and implying a process of earnest argumentative reasoning in proof of one's innocence. During the search, Jacob was no doubt a silent spectator; and when nothing was found that could justify the heavy charges preferred against him, his spirit was deeply stirred within him. Prompted by a just resentment at the unworthy reflections cast upon him, he takes a review of his whole conduct towards his father-in-law for twenty years past, and proves that he had been very hardly dealt with, while Laban himself had been a great gainer by his services.—  
¶ *What is my trespass?* Heb. פֶּשְׁעִי *pishi*; a term implying guilt of a higher degree than that denoted by the word 'sin.' Thus Job. 34. 37, 'He addeth rebellion (פֶּשַׁע *pesha*) unto his sin.' L

37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

38 This twenty years *have I been* with thee; thy ewes and thy she-

goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

39 That which was torn of *beasts*, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of <sup>k</sup> my hand didst thou require it *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night.

<sup>i</sup> Exod. 22. 10, &c.

<sup>k</sup> Exod. 22. 12.

is for the most part used in this sense of rebellion against God; hence the import of Jacob's question would seem to be, 'What divine or human law have I violated?'

37. *That they may judge betwixt us.* Heb. יִרְכְּרוּ *yokihu*; not the word usually rendered *judge*, but a term signifying to *discuss, debate, argue*, and thus consequently to come to a decision respecting the matter in question. It occurs in the following passages, Job 13. 3, 'Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to *reason* with God.' Job 32. 12, 'Behold, there was none of you that *convinced* Job, or that answered his words.' Is. 1. 18, 'Come now, and let us *reason* together.'

38. *Cast their young.* Miscarried; suffered abortion.—<sup>l</sup> *Not eaten.* Jacob's fidelity in this respect will appear more striking when contrasted with the opposite conduct of shepherds, whose neglected duties and abused functions are so graphically portrayed by the prophet, Ezek. 34. 1—5. 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; *wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.* The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was broken*, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have

ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because *there is no shepherd*: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.'

39. *I bare the loss of it.* Heb. אֲחַטְּנָה *ahattanah*, *I expiated, atoned, or satisfied for it*; i. e. I paid for it, as the Gr. expressly renders it, ἀπερὶννυσεν. The shepherds of the East were accountable for the flocks under their charge. Of this fact, the following extract, cited by Paxton from the Gentoo law, furnishes a remarkable proof 'Cattle shall be delivered over to the cow-herd in the morning; the cow-herd shall tend them the whole day with grass and water; and in the evening shall redeliver them to the master, in the same manner as they were intrusted to him; if, by the fault of the cow-herd, any of the cattle be lost or stolen, that cow-herd shall make it good. When a cow-herd has led cattle to any distant place to feed, if any die of some distemper, notwithstanding the cow-herd applied the proper remedy, the cow-herd shall carry the head, the tail, the fore-foot, or some such convincing proof taken from that animal's body, to the owner of the cattle; having done this, he shall be no further answerable; if he neglects to act thus, he shall make good the loss.' This had probably been an established usage in the East from the earliest periods, but the milder tenor of the divine law subsequently given dispensed with this rigid requisit on. See Ex. 22. 10—13.

40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night: and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house: I<sup>1</sup> served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle:

<sup>1</sup> ch. 29. 27, 28.

40. *In the day the drought consumed me, &c.* 'Does a master reprove his servant for being idle, he will ask, 'What can I do? the heat eats me up by day, and the cold eats me up by night; how can I gain strength? I am like the trees of the field: the sun is on my head by day, and the dew by night.' Roberts. 'Throughout Western Asia there is a much more remarkable difference between the temperature of the day and night than is generally experienced in Europe. The time when this difference is the strongest, is in the months of September, October, November, March, April, and May. In the depth of winter, the increased coldness of the day and the diminished coldness of the nights in the midst of summer, render the difference less considerable, although it is still very striking. An idea of this alternation can only be imagined by supposing a night of our winter temperature following a day warmer than any that our summers afford. In the summer time the night air is, in the warmest situations, cooler than that of our summer nights, and in other situations often as cool as the nights in our early spring. The night-coldness in the East is, however, felt as a gratification after the intense and relaxing heat of the day, as its bracing and reviving influence strengthens the frame to bear the daily heat which would otherwise be scarcely tolerable. But when the nights become positively cold, while the days remain extremely warm, the rapid alternation is most distressing to those who are exposed to its

and<sup>m</sup> thou hast changed my wages ten times.

42<sup>a</sup> Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and<sup>o</sup> the Fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. P God hath seen mine af-

<sup>m</sup> ver. 7.      <sup>a</sup> Ps. 124. 1, 2.      <sup>o</sup> ver. 53  
Isai. 8. 13.      P ch. 29. 32.      Exod. 3. 7.

full influence in the open air. European travellers feel the effects of this alternation very sensibly; the face becomes very sore, and the skin peels off the eyes also suffer, and the hands and lips are chapped. In many parts of Asia very severe and even frosty nights are, even in winter, succeeded by very warm days; and it may be said, indeed, that the only experience of what we should call winter weather which the inhabitants obtain, is exclusively during the night time.' *Pict. Bible*. Mr. Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, lost all his camels by the cold in one night in the deserts of Senaar; and Volney relates an affecting story of a hapless wanderer who was, like Jacob, frozen by the north wind at night, and burnt by the dreadful heat of the sun by day. *Comp. Jer.* 36: 30.—¶ *My sleep departed from mine eyes.* 'This implies more than that when he lay down at night, and endeavored to compose himself to rest, the effort was vain, as often happens to the sick and the distressed; viz. that by prolonging his labors into the night season, he voluntarily deprived himself of that repose and refreshment which nature requires.

42. *Except the God of my father, &c.* With exemplary humility, and a devout sense of his dependence on the blessing of heaven, Jacob here refers his prosperity to its true source; and in so doing he administers a keen reproof to Laban. He gives him plainly to understand that, notwithstanding all his specious talk about his regard for his children, and his sending him away with

fiction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

43 ¶ And Laban answered, and said unto Jacob, *These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine; and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto*

• 1 Chron. 12. 17. • Jude 9.

songs, with tabret, and with harp, yet it was owing to a special interposition of the Almighty that he was not stripped of every thing he had. Laban had made a merit of obeying the dream, but Jacob was not to be imposed upon by such a shallow pretence. He therefore construes the divine visitation into an evidence of his evil design, one by which God intended expressly to rebuke him, and thus plead the cause of the injured. As to the twofold title which he here applies to the Most High, 'The God of Abraham and the *Fear* of Isaac'—the reason assigned for it by Adam Clarke strikes us as extremely plausible, viz. that 'Abraham was long since dead, and God was *his unalienable* portion for ever. Isaac was yet alive in a state of *probation*, living in the *fear* of God; not exempt from the danger of *falling*, therefore God is said to be his *fear*; not only the object of his religious worship in a general way, but that holy and just God, before whom he was working out his salvation with fear and trembling—fear, lest he should fall; and trembling, lest he should offend.' Thus, Ps. 76. 12, 'Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that *ought to be feared*;' Heb. 'who is a fear.' Is. 8. 13, 'Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your *fear*, and let him be your *dread*.'

43. And Laban answered, &c. Laban, whose spirit was checked before he began, was now confounded. He quite gives up the cause, and wishes to adjust matters in the best way he can.

their children which they have borne?

44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

• ch. 26. 23. • Josh. 24. 27. • ch. 28. 18.

He cannot help prefacing his wish, however, by another sample of vain boasting and affected generosity. As if he had said, 'Yes, God hath given you many things; but remember they were all mine, and you have obtained them under me. Let us have no more disputes, however; for though I have come so far, and possess so great a force, yet how can I find it in my heart to hurt my own children? Come, therefore and let us make a covenant, and be good friends.' It will be observed that he attempts no defence against the charge of having repeatedly altered the terms of contract with Jacob, nor will conscience allow him to deny his secret purpose of sending him away empty. But this strange mixture of avarice, cunning, and effrontery is not without its parallel in every age and country.

44. *Let us make a covenant.* Heb. נִקְרְתָּהּ בְּרִית *nikrethah berith*, *let us cut a covenant.* As it was usual in the more solemn ratification of covenants for the parties to slay a victim, *cut it in twain*, and pass between the pieces, the verb כָּרַת *karath*, *to cut*, has been appropriated as a proper word to signify the making of a covenant, even in cases where no blood was shed. A similar mode of expression is found among the Greek classic writers; τέμνειν ὄρκον *temnein orkon*, literally, 'to cut an oath,' is used to indicate the act of making what in Hebrew is termed בְּרִית *berith*, or *covenant*. See Gen 15. 18.

45. *Jacob took a stone, &c.* Jacob

46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

47 And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed:

48 And Laban said, " This heap is a witness between me and thee

• Josh. 24. 27.

makes no reply to Laban's boasting, but lets it pass; and though he had felt so keenly and spoken so warmly, yet he consents to a covenant of peace. His resentment is under the control of his moral principle. He said nothing; but expressed his mind by actions. Indeed, it would almost seem that in his eagerness for reconciliation he is beforehand with Laban in the erection of a heap.

46. *Made a heap.* Heb. גַּל *gal*, properly a round heap; and this heap was probably made for the double purpose of an altar and a table. Jacob's stone or pillar was then perhaps set upon it for a memorial. The incident, however, of their eating together upon the heap is apparently introduced here by anticipation, as it does not seem to have occurred till after they had ratified the covenant mentioned below. Comp. vv. 53, 54.

47. *Called it Jegar-sahadutha.* Heb. יֶגֶר שְׁהָדוּתָא *yegar sahadutha*; a purely Syriac phrase, signifying *heap of witness* — Galeed. Heb. גִּלְעָד *galeed*; compounded of גַּל *gal*, a heap, and עֵד *ed*, witness, testimony, making the epithet perfectly equivalent to that bestowed by Laban. From this circumstance the mountain and country adjacent were called 'Galaad' or 'Gilead.'

49. *Mizpah.* There were several places of this name in Palestine. The word taken in one form means a high place affording an extensive prospect; and in another, a watch tower or beacon,

this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed:

49 And \* Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters; no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee;

\* Judg. 11. 29. 1 Sam. 7. 5.

as in the present text; whence we may conclude that the names were given to towns in elevated situations, or where watch-towers existed, or where commemorative heaps had been formed to mark the site of some important occurrence. A town built near the scene of this transaction between Jacob and Laban took the name which had been given to the heap of stones. It is mentioned in Judges 11 and 12; and from the 29th verse of the latter chapter, it seems to have been called 'Mizpeh of Gilead,' to distinguish it from other towns of the same name. It belonged to the half-tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan, and was the residence of Jephthah. In after-times the Ammonites obtained possession of it, and it was in their hands when Judas Maccabeus utterly destroyed it with fire. — ¶ *When we are absent one from another.* Heb. נִסְתָּר *nistather*, are hidden. The Lord take cognizance of our conduct when we cannot see each other. The language implies his firm conviction that in the absence of human witnesses or judges, the Most High would show himself a stern avenger of wrong-doing, whichever were the guilty party; and we may safely affirm that the power of religion is extremely weak in our minds, if the consideration of the all-seeing eye of Jehovah does not operate more strongly to restrain us from evil than the presence of the world of mortal men.

50. *No man is with us.* Some have

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee ;

52 This heap *be* witness, and *this* pillar *be* witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this

heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, <sup>7</sup> judge betwixt us. And Jacob <sup>2</sup> swore by <sup>a</sup> the Fear of his father Isaac.

<sup>7</sup> ch. 16. 5.    <sup>a</sup> ch. 21. 23.    <sup>a</sup> ver. 42.

inferred from this, that in making the contract Jacob and Laban withdrew from their several companies, and transacted the business in private, taking God alone to witness it. But it seems a more natural construction to understand this of each other after they had separated ; q. d. 'We are soon to part, and shall neither of us have any third party to see to our performance of our engagements. We are to be mutually thrown upon our honor and fidelity, and shall have nothing to keep us firm to our stipulations but our supreme regard to the presence of a just and holy God.' The sentiment is very striking, as coming from the lips of one who was doubtless an idolater ; but it shows that some knowledge of the true God was extensively prevalent at that early period, though in Laban's case it did not avail to extinguish the relics of his idolatrous propensities. Like thousands of others, he 'held the truth in unrighteousness.'

51. *This pillar which I have cast, &c.* Heb. יָרִיתִי *yarithi*, fixed, set up, placed. The erection of the pillar is indeed, in v. 45, ascribed to Jacob, but Laban may perhaps have claimed the act as his own from his having first suggested it, v. 44. At least we know of no other ground on which the assertion could be maintained.

53. *The God of Abraham, &c. judge betwixt us.* Notwithstanding the seemingly devout and orthodox vein in which Laban had previously addressed Jacob, he cannot well help manifesting his attachment to idolatry. This is evident from the ambiguity of the language in

respect to the being whom he invoked. As we have already noticed, in speaking to Jacob of Jehovah, v. 29, he calls him 'the God of *your* father,' as if he were not also *his* God ; and now, in swearing to the solemn covenant which was made between them, he does not appear to have invoked Jehovah as the *only* true God. He does indeed make mention of the 'God of Abraham,' yet it is in connection with Nahor and their father, that is, Terah ; and we well know that when Abraham was with Nahor and Terah, they were idolaters. This is clearly intimated Josh. 24. 2, 'The God of Abraham, of Nahor, and of Terah,' therefore, were words capable of a very ill construction. It is, in fact, little else than swearing by the idols of his Chaldean ancestors, and a virtual reproach of Jacob for having forsaken the religion of his forefathers. Thus strangely do men, whose minds are darkened by superstition, mingle sacred things with profane, and adulterate the truth and the worship of Jehovah with the vain figments of human device.—¶ *Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.* Jacob seems evidently aware of Laban's design in thus referring to their early ancestors, and therefore, that he might bear an unequivocal testimony against all idolatry, even that of Abraham in his younger years, he would swear only 'by the Fear of his father Isaac,' who had never worshipped any other than the true God. Thus studiously will the pious mind ever forbear giving countenance to aught that dishonors God, or that would establish a fellowship between him and idols.

54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and <sup>b</sup> blessed them: and Laban departed, and <sup>c</sup> returned unto his place.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 28. 1.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 18. 33. & 30. 25.

54. *Offered sacrifice.* Heb. יִזְבַּח זֶבַח *yizbah zebah, slew a slaughter.* Laban had before, v. 27. 28, professed his regret that he had not an opportunity to enjoy a day of feasting and of mirth at parting with his children. Such a parting would hardly have been seemly, even in a family which had no fear of God before their eyes, and Jacob accordingly prepares a religious feast previously to the departure of his father-in-law. To this he invited the whole company, not only his own party, but Laban's also, the effect of the recent happy reconciliation having been to make him regard and address those as 'brethren' whom a little before he could not but look upon as his determined enemies. So seasonably and kindly had God interposed to convert a threatening storm into a delightful calm. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies shall be at peace with him.'

55. *And early in the morning, &c.* 'Early rising is a universal custom. Thus, in every season of the year, the people may be seen at sunrise, strolling in all directions. At the time of the heavy dews, they bind a part of the robe round the head, which also falls on the shoulders. When a journey has to be taken, were they not to rise early, they would be unable to travel far before the sun had gained its meridian height. They therefore start a little before daylight, and rest under the shade during the heat of the day. Here also we have another instance of the interesting custom of blessing those who were about to be separated. A more pleasing scene than that of a father blessing his sons and daughters can scarcely be conceived. The fervor of

the language, the expression of the countenance, and the affection of their embraces, all excite our strongest sympathy. 'My child, may God keep thy hands and thy feet!' 'May the beasts of the forest keep far from thee!' 'May thy wife and thy children be preserved!' 'May riches and happiness ever be thy portion!' Roberts —¶ *Laban departed, and returned unto his place.* That is, to Haran. This parting proved final. We hear no more of Laban, or of the family of Nahor. They might for several ages retain some knowledge of Jehovah; but mixing with it the superstitions of the country, they naturally would, as there is little doubt they did, sink into gross idolatry and be lost among the heathens. 'Thus you will often see a man who has descended from religious parents, but whose heart is entirely taken up with the world: he keeps up the forms of godliness, though he denies the power; and mixes with them all the evil that he can rake up from the examples of his forefathers, with considerable additions of his own. The next generation degenerates still more, having less of the form of religion and more conformity to the world. The third throws off both the form and the power, retaining no vestige of the religion of their ancestors, excepting a few speculative notions, learnt from a few old books and sayings, which have no other influence upon them than to enable them to be more wicked than their neighbors, by sinning against somewhat of superior light. How important is it for good men to act in character in their families, inasmuch as every evil which they practise will be re-acted and increased by their carnal posterity.' Fuller.

## CHAP. XXXII.

**A**ND Jacob went on his way, and  
\* the angels of God met him.

2 And when Jacob saw them, he

▪ Ps. 91. 11. Hebr. 1. 14.

## CHAP. XXXII.

1. *The angels of God met him.* In what way this apparition of angels was made to Jacob, whether in vision or to his outward senses, the sacred writer does not inform us. It would, perhaps, be more consonant to the usual analogy of the divine dispensations towards the patriarchs, to suppose the former; yet as God had called Abraham and his posterity to be a peculiar people, a people to whom special privileges and prerogatives were to be granted, and as they then had no Scriptures containing the will of God, it is perfectly credible that he should communicate with them by the direct ministry of angels, as we know he often did. Some of the Jewish critics indeed, who usually show such an extravagant taste for the *false marvellous*, are here as much inclined to shrink from the true. They contend that these angels were merely *human messengers*, who were somehow providentially directed to meet him there, to inform him of his brother Esau's approach. But in that case they would hardly have been called 'the angels of God,' nor would the incident have afforded sufficient reason for giving a commemorative name to the place. We can see, moreover, that on the present occasion there was ample cause, if ever, for a visible manifestation of angelic agency. In returning to his native land, Jacob had to pass through the country of Edom, which was in the possession of his brother Esau. As he had left Esau deeply exasperated at being defrauded of his birthright, and resolved to take his life, he could not but feel an intense anxiety in the thought of passing unarméd through the territories of a powerful and hostile brother. God's *hosts*, therefore, now became visible to

said, This is God's <sup>b</sup> host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

<sup>b</sup> Josh. 5. 14. Ps. 103. 21. & 148. 2. Luke 2. 13.

allay the fear of man's hosts. Having just escaped one host of enemies, another is coming forth to meet him. At this juncture the heavenly messengers make their appearance, teaching him to whom he owed his late escape, and that he who had delivered, did deliver, and he might safely trust would still deliver him; thus making good the previous promise, Gen. 28. 15, 'Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.' It does not appear, indeed, that they were charged with any *verbal communication*, but Jacob would have no difficulty in *inferring* the object of their mission, viz. to work in his mind an assurance of the over-ruling and protecting providence of God. Thus, too, when the vision of the fiery chariots was vouchsafed to Elisha's servant, it was left to his own mind to draw the proper conclusion from such a cheering spectacle.

2. *Called the name of that place Mahanaim.* Heb. מַחֲנַיִם, *mahanaim*, a dual term, implying *two hosts* or *encampments*. It would seem that the angels were divided into bands, encompassing him, as it were, behind and before; thus corresponding with the two hosts of adversaries which at the same time, and with almost the same violent designs, were arrayed against him; the one having already been sent back without striking a blow, and the other soon to be dealt with in the same manner. This, however, was not expressly revealed to Jacob, but merely a general encouragement afforded him, that he might be inspired with confidence in the use of appropriate means for his preservation, a course which the divine interpositions are never intended to supersede. It was, perhaps, in allusion to



3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, <sup>c</sup> unto the land of Seir, <sup>d</sup> the country of Edom.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 33. 14, 16. <sup>d</sup> ch. 36. 6, 7, 8. Deut. 2. 5. Josh. 24. 4.

this incident that the Psalmist, some ages afterwards, Ps. 37. 7. was prompted to say, 'The angel of the Lord (i. e. the angelry, the collective multitude of angels) encampeth round about them that fear him.' The Gr. in rendering these two verses, makes use of the term *παρεμβολή* *parembolē*, *camp*—'And looking up he saw the camp (*parembolē*) of God encamping round about him.' 'And Jacob said when he saw them, this is God's camp (*parembolē*); and he called the name of that place *camps* (*parembolai*).' This term has been transferred from the Septuagint usage to the Apocalypse, ch. 20. 9, 'They compassed the camp (*parembolē*) of the saints about, and (i. e. even) the beloved city,' the camp and the city being one and the same. Near the place where this event occurred, and probably named from it, afterwards stood the city of Mahanaim, Josh. 21. 38, inhabited by the priests of the tribe of Levi. It was situated between Mount Gilead and the small river Jabbok, at the confines of the tribe of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. It seems to have been a place of great strength, and was therefore selected by Abner as the royal seat of Ishbosheth, son of Saul, during the war between him and David; and it was probably for the same reason that David himself withdrew thither during the rebellion of his own son Absalom. We know nothing of the subsequent history of the town, the precise situation of which has not been ascertained.

3. *Jacob sent messengers.* Heb מַלְאָכָיו *malakim*, the same word with that rendered 'angels' in the first verse. See Gen. 16. 7. The verb might doubtless be rendered 'had sent,' i. e. sometime

4 And he commanded them, saying, <sup>e</sup> Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

<sup>e</sup> Prov. 15. 1.

before this; for it is quite clear, from comparing v. 6 with the ensuing narrative, that the messengers returned while Jacob was encamped at the brook Jabbok, where the angels appeared to him. This mission was obviously a measure of wise precaution. Jacob had as yet heard nothing of his brother Esau, except that he had settled 'in the land of Seir, the country of Edom;' but knowing what had formerly taken place, and the temper of the man, he is apprehensive of consequences. He therefore resolves on sending messengers before him, in order to sound him, and, if possible, to appease his anger. —¶ *Unto the land of Seir.* At what time, or for what special reason Esau had removed to this region, we are not informed. It is highly probable, from Gen. 36. 6, 7, that the gradual enlargement of his possessions, and the domestic difficulties occasioned by his own and the unfilial deportment of his wives, had rendered his longer residence with his parents impracticable. But however this may have been, we cannot fail to recognise the ordination of heaven in his thus vacating the land of promise, and making room for its destined inheritor. He acted in the affair with the most absolute freedom, and yet was bringing to pass the divine counsels at every step.

4. *Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau, &c.* We may observe, in these conciliatory instructions to the messengers, (1.) That he declines the honor of precedence given in the blessing, calling Esau *his lord*. Isaac had said to him, ch. 27. 29, 'Be *lord* over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee.' But Jacob either under-

5 And <sup>f</sup> I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that <sup>g</sup> I may find grace in thy sight.

6 ¶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also <sup>h</sup> he

<sup>f</sup> ch. 30. 43. <sup>g</sup> ch. 33. 8, 15. <sup>h</sup> ch. 33. 1.

stood it of spiritual ascendancy, or, if of temporal, as referring to his posterity, rather than to himself. He therefore wisely refrains from all ground of offence on that head, and, without any derogation from his predicted superiority, assumes the air and language of deference to his brother, just as David did towards Saul, 1 Sam. 24. 7—9, from purely prudential considerations. (2.) He would have him know that he was not come to claim the *double portion*, nor even to divide with him his father's inheritance; for that God had given him plenty of this world's goods without it. Now, as these were things which had so greatly provoked Esau, a relinquishment of them would tend more than any thing else to conciliate him.

5. *I have oxen and asses, &c.* We are not to construe this as language prompted by a spirit of vain or self-complaisant ostentation. His design in acquainting Esau with his present prosperous circumstances, was perhaps to intimate to him that he was disinterested in seeking reconciliation, inasmuch as he had now become independent, and therefore could be under no *necessity* of suing for his friendship.

6. *We came to thy brother Esau, &c.* It cannot be doubted, we think, that the messengers had an interview with Esau, but as they make no report to Jacob of his answer to their message, it is probable that he maintained a guarded reserve as to the expression of his real sentiments, and merely informed them that he should go forth to meet the advancing company with a band of four

cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid, and <sup>i</sup> distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels into two bands;

<sup>i</sup> ch. 35. 3.

hundred men, without giving them to understand whether his intentions were hostile or pacific. Perhaps he was not fully resolved in his own mind what reception to give his brother. Had his purposes been unequivocally those of an enemy, it is not likely that he would have acquainted Jacob beforehand with his intended movements, but would have come upon him unawares. The space of twenty years would naturally tend to cool down the most violent hatred, especially towards an absent object, and it is not improbable that the message of Jacob now found in Esau but the feeble relics of an ancient grudge, which, though revived perhaps for a moment, on the intelligence of Jacob's approach, was speedily extinguished by the exhibition of a brother's kindness.

7. *Greatly afraid and distressed.* Heb. יַעֲזֵר *yetzer*, *straitened*. This term with us is sometimes lightly applied to the state of mind produced by ordinary troubles; but in the Scriptures it denotes a *sore strait*, from which there seems to be no way of escape. This distress would probably be heightened by the recollection of his sin, which had first excited the resentment of Esau. But throughout the whole we must recognise the secret working of the Most High. He designed, by suffering his servant to be pressed for a time with this extreme perplexity, to quicken his fervency in prayer. Conscious security begets in the best of men a woful remissness in this respect. In order, therefore, to prevent the torpidity which

8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

9 ¶<sup>k</sup> And Jacob said, <sup>l</sup> O God

<sup>k</sup> Ps. 50. 15.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 28. 13.

is apt to come over the life of our faith, God is placed oftentimes to suffer us to be harrassed with fears for which there is no *real* occasion. Our earnest prayers may have secured the desired deliverance, yet the visible display is delayed to the last moment, that our graces may receive their fullest exercise. In the mean time we are taught by this incident that the constancy of the children of God is never so firm but that some carnal misgivings will betray themselves; and that they who imagine themselves possessed of a confidence void of all distrust, are probably strangers to a true faith; for God does not promise his present aid in order wholly to free us from the dominion of fear, but rather that fear may not prevail and drive us to desperation. Still, our fears often gain an ascendancy for which there is no good reason.—¶ *And he divided, &c.* Although the patriarch was extremely perplexed, and knew not what to think of his brother's intentions, yet he determines to prepare himself for the worst. Though assured, on the whole, of the divine protection, he will neglect no means necessary for his own preservation. First, he divides all his people with the flocks and herds into two parts, that if Esau should come and smite the one, the other might flee and escape. Secondly, he betakes himself to earnest prayer to God. And lastly, he prepares a large present of cattle, which he sends forward in separate droves to his brother.—¶ *Into two bands.* Heb. לשני מחנות *lishne mahanoth*, into two camps, or encampments; the same word as that employed v. 2. 'This plan seems not to have been first invented by Jacob; but it may be con-

of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD <sup>m</sup> which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 31. 3, 13.

jectured that large caravans used at that time to take this precaution against hostile attacks. Sir H. Blount relates in his *Travels*, that he travelled with a caravan which had divided itself in like manner into two troops; one of which that went before, being attacked by robbers, had an action with them, and were plundered, whereas the other escaped uninjured.' *Rosenmuller.*

8. *And said.* That is, thought, concluded with himself. See Note on Gen. 20. 11.—¶ *Shall escape.* Heb. לִפְלֶטֶחַ *liphlethah*, (shall be) for an escaping. Gr. εἰς τὸ σωζέσθαι, for a being preserved alive.

9. *And Jacob said, &c.* As this is one of the most striking of the scriptural examples of an eminently devout and successful prayer, it claims a very particular notice. Observe, (1.) It is not merely commending himself to the divine protection. He pleads the promises. He approaches God as the God of his father, and as such a God in covenant. This was laying hold of the divine faithfulness. It was the prayer of faith; and though we may not have exactly the same plea in our approaches to God, yet we have one that is more endearing and more prevalent. The God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a character which excites more hope and in which more great and precious promises have been made, than in any other. (2.) He addresses him as his own God, pleading what he had promised to him, as well as to his fathers. 'Who saidst unto me, Return,' &c. Jehovah has never made promises to us in the same extraordinary way that he did to Jacob; but, whatever he has promised to believers in general

10 I am not worthy of the least of all the <sup>n</sup> mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with <sup>o</sup> my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 24. 27.    <sup>o</sup> Job 8. 7.

may be pleaded by every one of them in particular, especially when encountering opposition in the path of duty. (3.) Another remarkable feature in this prayer, is the *deep spirit of self-abasement* which breathes through it. While he celebrates the great mercy and truth of God towards him, he acknowledges himself *unworthy* of the least instance of either. The original is, if possible, still more emphatic; 'I am less than all the mercies,' &c., as if he not only disclaimed the worthiness of *merit*, but also that of *meetness*. In view of his own sinful conduct on a former occasion, he is amazed at the returns of mercy and truth which he had met with from a gracious God. By sin he had reduced himself in a manner to nothing; but God's goodness had made him great. So, do we desire to succeed in our approaches to God, we must be moved by the same spirit of humility; prostrating ourselves in the dust before him, and esteeming every, even the smallest favor, as an unmerited boon of heaven. (4.) Finally, having in this devout and humble manner prefaced his petition, he now presents it; 'Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother,' &c. 'This was doubtless the petition of a kind husband and a tender father. But it was not as such only that it was presented. It was mainly in the character of a believer in the promises, and one deeply concerned for the divine glory, that it was offered. It was as though he had said, 'If my life, and that of the mother with the children be cut off, how are thy promises to be fulfilled?' It is natural for us, as husbands and parents, to be im-

11 <sup>p</sup> Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and* <sup>q</sup> the mother with the children.

<sup>p</sup> Ps. 59. 1, 2.    <sup>q</sup> Hos. 10. 14.

portunate with God for the well-being of those who are so nearly related to us; but the way to obtain mercy for them is to seek it in subordination to the divine glory.

10. *The truth which thou hast showed.* Heb. האמת אשר עשיתי *haemeth asher asiitha*, the truth which thou hast done; from which it appears that *truth*, in the scriptural sense of the term, denotes something which may be *done* or *acted*, as well as *spoken*. Thus, John 3. 21, 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light.' See also 1 John 1. 6, Mic. 7. 20. 'Doing truth,' is fulfilling in act whatever is promised or commanded in word. Thus understood, it may be affirmed either of God or man.—¶ *With my staff, &c.* That is, having nothing but a staff when I passed over this Jordan, I am now become so prosperous as to be able to divide my people, and my flock and herds, into these two large and imposing bands. Chal. 'By myself alone, I passed over this Jordan.'

11. *Smite me, and the mother with the children.* Literally, 'smite me, even the mother with the children;' thus identifying himself with the company of which he was the leader and head. So 2 Sam. 17. 12, 'And of him, and of all the men that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one;' i. e. of him, even of all the men that are with him; spoken of as one body. Thus, too, Gen. 14. 15, 'And he divided himself;' i. e. his party. The phrase 'to smite, or slay, the mother with the children,' is probably a Jewish idiom for *leaving nothing remaining*. Calvin suggests that the expression is taken from a bird-catcher's seizing and carrying away the

12 And <sup>r</sup> thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

13 ¶ And he lodged there that same night, and took of that which

<sup>r</sup> ch. 28, 13, 14, 15.

mother-bird and all her young, thus spoiling the whole nest. But as the literal rendering is 'the mother *upon* the children,' it is perhaps rather founded upon what sometimes happens in the sacking of a city, when a devoted mother rushes between her child and the implement of death about to be plunged into its heart, and is thus massacred *with* or *upon* her offspring. Thus, Hos. 10. 14, 'The mother was dashed to pieces *upon* her children.' As Jacob's life was now, as it were, multiplied in the persons of so many, dear to him as his own soul, his apprehension increases in proportion.

12. *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.* We do not find these precise words in any of the previous promises, but it is clear that they are Jacob's interpretation of the assurance contained ch. 28. 15, 'Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.' We may learn, therefore, from this how much is meant when God is said to *be with* any one. It is virtually a promise to do him good, to bless him, to crown him with prosperity.

13. *Lodged there that night.* Jacob and his company seem now to have been north of the small river Jabbok, near to the place where it falls into the Jordan. Here he is said to have lodged that night. Afterwards, v. 22, we read of his 'rising up,' and sending his company 'over the ford.' Probably it was during one single night that the whole of what follows in this chapter occurred. In the order of the narrative, his first step is to try the effect of a present.—¶ *Took of that which came to his hand* This is generally understood

came to his hand <sup>r</sup> a present for Esau his brother ;

14 Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,

15 Thirty milch camels with their

<sup>r</sup> ch. 43. 11. Prov. 18. 16.

to mean that he took of that which, at the time, *came most readily to hand* ; but the usage of the original makes it doubtful whether the true sense of it be not, that he took of that which *had come into his hand, which he possessed, which he had previously acquired.*

14. *Two hundred she-goats, &c.* The sum total of the cattle selected for this purpose was five hundred and fifty ; a most magnificent present for one in his circumstances. It was a striking proof of his high estimation of the covenant promise, that he was willing, for its sake, to forego so large a part of his possessions. We know how tenaciously, for the most part, men cleave to those acquisitions which have cost them much labor and care. Yet Jacob here voluntarily subjects himself to so immense a loss, that he may purchase a secure return to the land of his inheritance. Had he been so disposed, he could easily have retired to some quiet nook, where he could have enjoyed his substance unimpaired. But so highly does he prize the promised blessing, that he is ready, if needs be, to impoverish himself for the present that he may be unspeakably enriched in his latter end. 'Heaven, he knew, would pay for all. Get but a patriarch's eye to see heaven afar off, and we shall be soon ready to buy it at any rate. The pearl of price cannot be a dear bargain, though we part with all to purchase it.' *Trapp.*

15. *Thirty milch camels.* That is, camels of the most valuable sort. 'The Bedouins ride the male camel in preference to the female, and the former is also capable of carrying heavier burdens, and yet the female is much more

colts, forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals.

16 And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whith-

valuable, on account of her milk, which forms a prominent article in the diet of the Arabs. They drink it either fresh or sour. They are fond of sour milk, and it seems that the milk of the camel turns sour sooner than that of most other animals. Butter and cheese are very seldom made of this milk. It is remarkable that some of the tribes refuse to sell milk to the towns-people, the epithet 'milk-seller' being regarded as a term of great opprobrium. It is also observable, that the Arabs not only drink the camels' milk themselves, but give great quantities of it to their horses. Foals also are weaned from their dams in thirty days, and for the next hundred days are fed exclusively on camels' milk; and during the ensuing hundred, they receive a bucket of milk every evening along with their barley. Burckhardt says that when the Bedouins take colts of two or three years old to sell in Syria, they recommend their animals by protesting (of course falsely) that since they were weaned they have had no other food than camels' milk.' *Pict. Bible*.

16. *Every drove by themselves.* The droves were arranged in this manner, separated by pretty wide intervals, that Esau's enmity, if he cherished any, might be gradually abated as one mark of kindness after another met him, and also to afford a better opportunity for those in the rear to escape, if those in the van should be attacked. Every

er goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee?

18 Then thou shalt say, *They be thy servant Jacob's*: it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and behold also he is behind us.

19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

servant presenting his drove with the same words would strike Esau with amazement. It would seem as if all the riches of the East were coming in upon him; and every one concluding by announcing his master as coming behind them, would work upon his generosity. He expected, it is likely, a host of armed men, and felt resolved to fight it out; but instead of an enemy, here is a present worthy of a prince, and the owner coming after it with all the confidence of a friend and the kindness of a brother.—¶ *Put a space betwixt drove and drove.* Heb. רֵיחַ *revah*, breath, i. e. space or room that shall give freedom to the breath, *breathing-space*.

19. *On this manner shall ye speak, &c.* 'I almost think I hear Jacob telling his servants what they were to say to Esau. He would repeat it many times over, and then ask, 'What did I say?' until he had completely *schooled* them into the story. They would be most attentive; and at every interval, some of the most officious would be repeating the tale. The head servant, however, would be especially charged with the delivery of the message. When they went into the presence of Esau, they would be very particular in placing much stress on Jacob's saying, 'the present is sent unto my lord!' and this would touch his feelings. Servants who see the earnestness of their master, imitate him in this when they stand before the person to whom they are sent

20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will 'appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

21 So went the present over be-  
† Prov. 21. 14.

They repeat a number of little things respecting him; his great sorrow for his offence, his weeping, his throwing himself into the dust, and his fearful expressions. Should the occasion, however, be of a pleasing nature, they mention his great joy, and his great anxiety for an interview. The dependants of Esau, also, would hear the story, and every now and then be making exclamations at the humility of Jacob, and the value of his present. They would also put their hands together in a supplicating posture, for Esau to attend to the request. He, feeling himself thus acknowledged as *lord*, seeing the servants of his brother before him, and knowing that all his people had witnessed the scene, would consider himself greatly honored. In this way many a culprit in the East gains a pardon, when nothing else could purchase it. Should the offender be too poor to send a present, he simply despatches his wife and children to plead for him; and they seldom plead in vain.' Roberts.

20. Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. He was particular to have this fact distinctly announced, lest Esau should suppose he intended himself to escape. — ¶ For he said. That is, said to himself. — ¶ I will appease him. Heb. אֶכַּפֶּרֶה אֶפְנֵי פָנָיו *akapperah panav, I will cover* (i. e. pacify) *his face*; from כָּפַר *kaphar*, to cover, the term usually employed under the law to signify 'making atonement.' Gr. ἐξιλάσασθαι τὸν προσώπον αὐτοῦ, *I will propitiate-his countenance*. Chal. 'I will assuage his anger.' — ¶ Accept of me. Heb. יִשָּׁע פָּנַי

fore him; and himself lodged that night in the company.

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, <sup>u</sup> and passed over the ford Jabbok.

<sup>u</sup> Deut. 3. 16.

*yissa pani, will lift up my face*. See the import of this idiom explained, Gen. 19. 21. Thus, Prov. 21. 14, 'A gift in secret pacifieth anger.'

21. Lodged that night. Not the whole of the night, but only a part of it, as will soon appear.

22. And he rose up and passed over the ford. Having sent off the present, he seems to have tried to get a little rest; but whatever sleep might fall to the lot of the women and children, or rest to the beasts of burden, there was but little of either for him. Unable to close his eyes, he 'rose up' and having first crossed the ford to ascertain the safety of the passage for the rest of the company, he returned to the northern side, and took his whole family and all that he had, and sent them over the stream. His party having all safely passed the ford, he himself staid behind; and in this incident we see another proof of the prevalence of his faith; for, had he been governed by the usual maxims of worldly prudence, he would at this critical junction have remained with the host. For, how did he know but Esau's band might suddenly set upon them when they thought themselves most secure? But, purposing to devote the rest of the night to fervent prayer, he is not afraid to confide his company to the protection of that God, whose face and favor he desired to seek, assured that the most effectual defence he could afford them would be to engage omnipotence in their behalf. It is very seldom that our worldly affairs suffer from the time spent in prayer. — ¶ Jabbok

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

This is the name of a brook or small river rising near Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites, and emptying into the Jordan on its eastern side not far below the lake of Tiberias. As the original is 'Yabbok,' and closely related in its etymology to 'Abak,' *wrestled*, it is supposed to have derived its name from Jacob's there wrestling with the angel. Mr. Buckingham says that where he crossed the river it was ten yards wide, and that the stream being deeper than the Jordan, and quite as rapid, was forded with difficulty. The natives call the river 'Nahr-el-Zerkah,' or *river of Zerkah*, from a neighboring village of that name.

24. And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled, &c. Heb. יַעֲבֹק *yeabek*; a term occurring only here, and apparently derived from אַבָּק *abak*, *dust*, and applied to *wrestling*, from the *dust* that was excited by the action of the combatants. In the Grecian games, moreover, it was common for the wrestlers to raise as much dust as possible, both for the purpose of blinding each others' eyes, and for grasping more firmly the naked body, which, in order to make it supple for the occasion, was copiously besmeared with oil.—In the words before us we come upon the narrative of one of the most remarkable and mysterious incidents recorded in the sacred page. In considering it with some minuteness, the first and most obvious inquiry has respect to the *Person* with whom Jacob wrestled, and the second to the nature and object of the *Wrestling* itself. (1.) As to the *person*, it will be noticed that in the passage before us he is termed *a man*; but in Hos 12. 4, where the incident is somewhat more fully described, the prophet says of Jacob that 'he had power over *the angel*,

24 ¶ And Jacob was left alone, and there \*wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day.

\* Hos. 12. 3, 4. Eph. 6. 12.

and prevailed.' This makes it clear it was not a *human* antagonist with whom Jacob was now called to enter the lists. But we have a farther clue to his identity in the sequel of the present narrative. In giving the reason for calling the name of the place Peniel, v. 30, he says, 'for I have seen *God* face to face.' Here then it is obvious that he who is at one time called '*a man*,' is at another called '*the angel*,' and again designated by the august title of '*God*;' leaving us to the inevitable inference that the mysterious wrestler was no other than the divine personage so frequently brought before us under the appellation of '*the Angel*'—'*the Angel of the Lord*'—'*the Angel of the Covenant*,' &c.; that is, in other words, the Son of God appearing in that nature which he afterwards assumed in accomplishing the work of our redemption. Could there be the least remaining doubt on the subject it is dispelled by the farther statement of Hosea in the passage above cited, v. 4, 5, 'He found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; even the *Lord of Hosts*; the *Lord* is his memorial;' i. e. the name by which he is perpetually to be remembered in connection with this event. (2.) As to the true nature and scope of this transaction, although it has been much doubted among commentators whether it were a real event or a vision only, yet the words of the text seem spontaneously to yield the sense of a *literal personal encounter*. Left alone in the silence of the night, and in the open field, with his mind deeply exercised with the perils that surrounded him, the patriarch suddenly feels himself laid hold of by some unknown assailant. It is not unlikely that at the first onset he might apprehend him to be one of Esau's four hun-



dred men, for he comes upon him not as a friend, but as a foe. Whoever he may be, he at once begins to struggle with Jacob, and apparently aims, by a violent assault, to throw him to the ground. He, on the other hand, defends himself to the utmost of his power. He grasps his antagonist, and exerting all his strength, seems determined not to suffer himself to be thrown. How long the conflict continued before he discovered the true character of his opponent, is uncertain; but we are informed that it was not 'until the breaking of the day' that the wrestling ceased, nor even then did the victory declare itself for the divine antagonist. 'He saw that he prevailed not against him.' Such, with the added particulars soon to be detailed, was the nature of this mysterious encounter, in which, from the mode of narration, we can scarcely fail to recognise a *real occurrence, a true and literal act of wrestling*; in a word, as actual a contest as ever took place among the athletes of the Olympic or Isthmian games. This interpretation is confirmed by what is said of the *effect* of the engagement upon Jacob's person. The hollow of his thigh was touched, and a permanent dislocation of the hip joint ensued, which, for aught that appears, attended him through life. It is hardly probable that a *visionary* conflict would thus have resulted in an abiding *bodily* injury. But while we thus understand the narrative of a *real* transaction, we are not thereby precluded from assigning to it a *spiritual, figurative, or symbolical* import of the highest moment, both to Jacob and his believing seed in all ages. Indeed, it is not possible to conceive how such a peculiar mode of manifestation could be worthy of the Deity, were it not intended to shadow out some great instructive moral truth or lesson. We have only to revert to the circumstances in which the transaction occurred to see that such a purpose was undoubtedly designed by it. Jacob

was now agitated and distressed in view of the uncertain issue of a meeting with his brother. In his perplexity he had recourse to the throne of grace; he cast himself entirely by prayer and supplication upon the protection of heaven. In order to calm the disquietude of his spirit, and arm him with all needed confidence, God is pleased to inform him by a *significant action* of the favorable issue of the affair. As he was permitted to prevail over the Angel, so he should prevail over Esau. Viewing the transaction as having a special reference to Esau, we see not why the Angel may not be considered *in this respect* as sustaining the person of Esau. This is the opinion of several Jewish commentators, and thus understood, the symbolical strife has a pertinency which is by no means so obvious on any other construction. It is well known that nothing was more common in God's mode of intercourse with the patriarchs and prophets than to impart information to them by means of *action* as well as *words*; and as Jacob's predicted ascendancy over his brother was to be obtained through a series of *struggles* well represented by *wrestling*; as he did, in fact, receive his name from an act appropriate to a wrestler, viz. that of *supplanting* or *tripping up the heels*; we know not by what emblematic procedure the grand fact of his prevalence over Esau could be more suitably set forth than that of the *mystical athletic strife* here described, though its more immediate and special reference is to his triumph over Esau's resentment on the present occasion. Nor is it, we conceive, a sufficient objection to this, that it makes the divine personage, while evidently *favoring* Jacob, to appear at the same time as the representative of an *enemy*; for we find, in the commencement of the chapter, that the good angels who appeared to Jacob for his encouragement represented at the same time two *hostile* bands. Besides, we find, if we mistake not, a striking

confirmation of this view of the subject in the parallel passage of Hosea before alluded to; 'He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him.' We here see the ascendancy of Jacob traced back to its very commencement at the birth of the two brothers, and thence carried forward to the time now mentioned, when he prevailed over Esau in the person of the representative angel, as a pledge of his prevailing over him in his own person, as we learn that he shortly after did. This is indeed called 'having power with God,' because it was by the special favor and blessing of God that he was enabled to come off conqueror over the exasperated feelings of his brother. It was, in fact, a twofold prevalence, the one the type and earnest of the other. 'He wept and made supplication;' he threw himself, in all the fervency of the most importunate prayer, upon the mercy of God, and God heard him and granted his request. This was prevailing over infinitely superior power, and his prevalence in this case was at the same time an image of his prevailing over Esau; and we have only to consult the details of the ensuing narrative to see how strikingly all the circumstances of the *shadow* correspond with those of the *substance*. As he humbled himself in deep abasement of soul, and implored the favor of the Angel, so he bowed himself seven times to the ground, and by expressions and postures of the profoundest reverence, sought to conciliate his brother. As the symbolical Angel, though infinitely stronger than Jacob, suffered himself to be overcome, holding his power in abeyance; so Esau, though coming against him with four hundred men, a force no doubt vastly superior to that of the patriarch, was in like manner wrought upon, softened, and subdued by the melting importunities of his brother, who would

not part from him any more than from the Angel without the exchange of a blessing, and who seems, in fact, almost in express words to identify Esau with the divine wrestling Angel, when he says, ch. 33. 10, 'Receive my present at my hand; *for therefore have I seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me*;' implying, that in the mystical strife which had taken place he had seen his face or person in that of his angelic adversary; and as he *then* appeared pleased, i. e. pacified, or conciliated towards him, so he hoped he would be *now*, and thus turn all the shadowy incidents into a delightful reality. But while we consider the above as the legitimate and leading scope of the transaction here recorded, we do not hesitate at the same time to recognise another subordinate drift of infinite wisdom in ordering its occurrence. We believe it was designed, as it has generally been understood, to teach the importance and the efficacy of earnest, fervent, *agonizing* prayer, particularly in circumstances of affliction and distress. It is, indeed, regarded by some as doubtful whether the 'weeping and supplication' of which Hosea speaks, took place at the same time with the wrestling, or whether ~~the~~ refers to the humble and importunate prayer made some hours previous, and contained, v. 9—12. But as he undoubtedly recognised the true character of his divine antagonist before they parted, and as he refused to let him go until he had received a blessing at his hand, this is evidently to be considered as implying the essence of a prayer, and that, no doubt, of the most fervent description. In order, therefore, to gain an adequate view of the true nature of this mysterious strife, we must look upon it as shadowing forth that secret inward struggle of the soul, which forms the very life of all earnest and prevalent prayer with God. In the athletic exercise of wrestling, the highest effort of

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and ⁊ the

⁊ Matt. 26. 41. 2 Cor. 12. 7.

corporeal prowess is required. Every nerve and muscle of every limb is called into play, and put to its utmost tension. The whole energy of the frame is concentrated in the act, and the least relaxation perils the issue of the conflict. So also in prayer. All the powers of our minds, and all the strongest feelings of our hearts are to be enlisted in this duty. Our earnestness and zeal should be wrought up to the highest pitch of intensity. Precepts, promises, arguments,—whatever can constitute pleas of the most cogent and prevailing nature, should be brought forward. We should ‘stir ourselves up to take hold on God.’ And oftentimes weeping and supplication, in imitation of Jacob, yea, strong crying and tears, in imitation of the Saviour, should be resorted to. Then it is that we know something of the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous, which availeth much. Then it is that we feel the deep internal movings of the Spirit, ‘which maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ But this view of the subject will be more fully developed as we proceed.

25. *And when he saw, &c.* That is, when the Angel saw. Gr. and Chal. ‘When he saw that he could do nothing against him.’ The fact stated is indeed wonderful—Omnipotence unable to vanquish the ‘worm Jacob!’ But in order to understand it, we must penetrate beyond the veil of the physical encounter, and direct our view to the hidden spirituality that is couched within. The strength by which Jacob sustained the contest with an almighty opponent was not the strength of bones and sinews, nor was the non-prevalence of the Angel any thing else than the inability to withstand the power of an unwavering

hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

faith pleading his own promises. He may be said, therefore, not to have prevailed, just as a benevolent man, who is beset by a needy beggar, piteously telling his tale of woe, and clinging to the skirts of his garment, may be said ‘not to prevail’ to cast him off, though possessed of far superior physical strength, because he yields to the kindly impulses of his nature. Yet we must not forget that it was all along by the secret ministration of God’s Spirit that Jacob was enabled to put forth the moral power which he did in the present conflict. The strength by which he prevailed was as truly God’s strength, as that by which God himself in outward show contended against him. Indeed, we must consider God in this transaction as acting in the double capacity of an adversary and an assistant, evincing in the second character greater strength than in the first; fighting, as it were, *against* him with his left hand, and *for* him with his right; putting far greater force into the defence than into the assault, and, as Calvin says, ‘being stronger than himself by yielding the victory to faith.’ Such a mode of representation appears strange and paradoxical to one who is inexperienced in the warfare of the spirit, who has never passed through the siftings and trials to which God often subjects his children. But the story teaches a familiar doctrine to those who have waded in the deep waters of affliction and temptation. They are never at a loss to understand, or backward to acknowledge, the source to which they are indebted for the strength that enables them to overcome in those arduous struggles in which the Almighty himself seems to come forth in battle array against them.—¶ *He touched the hollow of his thigh, &c.* That is,

hurt, injured. See note on Gen. 20. 6. What is here termed the 'hollow of the thigh,' is undoubtedly the socket of the hip-joint, though it is not easy to determine the precise nature of the injury inflicted. From its being said, v. 32, that the children of Israel ate not of the sinew which shrank, it would seem that one part especially affected was the tendinous ligament connecting the thigh-bone with the hip-joint. But if so, it was probably owing to a dislocation of the thigh-bone. This would naturally be attended with such a violent wrenching of the muscles and sinews in the neighborhood, that even after the bone was replaced, it might cause a permanently halting or limping gait. Yet it is highly probable that the effect, in Jacob's case, was produced without pain, and was designed to impress him with a profound sense of the divine condescension, from the fact that one who had thus shown himself possessed of infinite power, should deign to be prevailed over by a worm of the dust. As Paul, in the abundance of his revelations, 2 Cor. 12. 7, received a 'thorn in the flesh,' to humble him, or to prevent undue exaltation, so in the present case Jacob received a similar token, which it was fitting he should carry with him to his grave. But this incident cannot be rightly viewed, except in connexion with the spiritual bearing of the whole transaction; in which light we shall dwell upon it somewhat more at length. The hip, as is well known, is the foundation, so to speak, of the edifice of the body. If dislocated, the body falls down. A dislocation of the hip is an extremely rare case, only practicable to astonishing strength, especially in the position which a person must assume in wrestling with another. But this effect was wrought upon Jacob in the midst of the encounter, and the consequence would of course be that he could wrestle no longer. All that remained for him was to hold fast to his opponent by

his arms, to cling to him with all his might, so that his antagonist could not remove from the place without dragging him along with him. Indeed, Jacob could now neither stand nor go; and the wrestling angel, who had thus deprived him of his strength, left him no alternative but to hang upon his neck, if he wished to be preserved from falling. And this he appears to have done, retaining his grasp with unflinching tenacity, as if resolved that nothing should separate him from one who had it in his power to bless him as no other being in the universe could. But passing from the letter to the spirit, and interpreting what is here said of wrestling of the inward conflicts of the soul, we remark, that no purpose is more settled in the counsels of heaven, than to beat down the vain self-confidence, which in one form or other is so prone to intrude itself into the devoutest doings of even the best of men. Some secret reliance upon their own strength, or uprightness, or understanding, mingles with the workings of their hearts, and prevents that entire renunciation of themselves which is essential to their being filled with the fulness of God. But when the Most High begins to wrestle with a soul, that is, to carry on more effectually the work of grace, he struggles with him in such a manner as to abase every high thing that exalts itself within him, and bring him to the lowest depths of self-abasement and self-annihilation. He will leave him nothing to plead but his pure gratuitous mercy in Christ. He will cause him, by his hidden influences in his heart, to feel that he has no alternative remaining but to embrace with the arms of faith the Son of God, and thus, as a *crippled conqueror*, to prevail. He thus learns to believe from the heart the declaration that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' He is thus led into those mysterious processes of the inward life which may

26 And \* he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh : and he said, \* I

\* Luke 24. 28.      \* Hos. 12. 4.

justly be called a continual riddle, which cannot be solved without personal experience. In a word, we may see, in this incident of the mystical conflict, how completely the Lord designs to strip the sinner of every relic of self-confidence, that he may cast himself, weak, weary, lame, halting, and helpless, into the arms of the all-sufficient Saviour.

26. *And he said, Let me go, &c.* The Angel evidently proved his infinite superiority to Jacob by depriving him of all power to continue the combat; and yet he enhances the wonders of the scene by saying to the patriarch, 'Let me go,' and thus virtually declaring himself to be vanquished. How astonishing the procedure! As long as Jacob possesses strength, he is overcome, and conquers at the moment it forsakes him! But thus says the Apostle, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' The Angel's words were obviously designed as a farther trial of the patriarch's faith. As men usually at early dawn, instead of spending the time in prayer, are enjoying their repose, or deem it their duty to enter upon the business of the day, Jacob's divine antagonist would try whether he would yield to natural inclination and desist, or would hold out a little longer in his supplications. Thus our Saviour *seemed* by his words to discourage the addresses of the Syro-Phœnician woman, Matt. 15. 22—23, when in reality his object was to quicken and animate her to still greater fervency in her intercessions. 'Let me go,' says the wrestling angel. What life and courage must this have imparted to Jacob! For what did the words imply? That the Son of God was in his power, and that he would not depart unless Jacob gave his consent to it. This was an advantage too precious to be neglected. Accordingly he makes no account of

will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

the reason which the Angel urged for his request, 'For the day breaketh.' 'Let it break,' might Jacob have replied, 'What is that to me? I have a thousand reasons why I will not let thee go; and even the breaking of the day is one of them. A perilous day is approaching. I am afraid of my brother Esau. I stand in special need of thy blessing. Thou dost well to remind me of it, that I may cleave to thee the closer.'—¶ *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* The highest heroism of faith shines forth in these words. He declares himself determined to retain his pertinacious hold upon the author of blessing. But could He not easily have shaken him off? Could He not have dislocated or paralysed his arms, and thus have freed himself from his death-like embrace? Doubtless his physical power was competent to this, but his omnipotence was limited in its operation by his promise to his servant 'to do him good.' He had bound himself to bless him, and his great power could only be exercised towards him in accordance with this engagement. Nor did he really desire that Jacob should free him from the obligation to do him good. He rather aimed to have the pleasure of seeing how firm, by his grace, are the hearts of his children, even when many waters of affliction go over them, and how the seed of God remains in them. It was the same kind of pleasure that he experienced when Job exclaimed, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' He himself is the author of this constancy, and hence it is that it is so pleasing in his sight; for he takes pleasure in all his works. And what pleasure does it still afford him, when the Christian does not suffer himself to be dismayed by afflictions and temptations, but even then cleaves to his word and his grace, when every thing seems to go against him?

27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28. And he said, <sup>b</sup>Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but

<sup>b</sup> ch. 35. 10. 2 Kings 17. 34.

27. *And he said unto him, What is thy name?* This question respecting Jacob's name is asked by the Angel, not, of course, because he was previously ignorant of it, but that from the answer he might take occasion to change it, as he immediately did. But not only so. He put the question in order to instruct Jacob respecting the signification of his present name, and to lead him to reflect upon the occasion of its being given him. This was at his birth, when he held his twin brother Esau by the heel. His birth reminded him of the divine prediction, 'that the elder should serve the younger.' He might have forgotten it, but the Lord had not. He designs, therefore, that the patriarch shall derive encouragement from this name. It means *supplanter*, and was, of course, well adapted to inspire him with confidence that Esau should not overcome him. This will account for such an apparently irrelevant mode of replying to his petition. Jacob, no doubt, thought with himself, 'Why this question? I ask for a blessing, and he inquires my name. I should have preferred an immediate fulfilment of the desires of my heart.' But God often takes what appears to us a circuitous method of answering our requests; though the result shows that it is the wisest and best. Upon the mention of his name, it is highly probable that a new light shone upon it, rendering its import clear and consoling to his mind. It reminded him not only of his predicted ascendancy over Esau, but also of all the rich blessings and prerogatives of the covenant established with his fathers. And what would more tend to cheer and encourage him on this occasion than such refreshing recollections? Yet the ensuing

Israel: for as a prince hast thou <sup>c</sup>power with God, and <sup>d</sup>with men, and hast prevailed.

<sup>c</sup> Hos. 12. 3, 4.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 25. 31. & 27. 33.

words disclose a still deeper drift in the question.

28. *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel.* 'Israel' signifies 'principally prevailer with God,' one of its component members signifying the same as the name of 'Sarah,' *princess*. The proper names occurring in the sacred volume are frequently used to designate the *character* rather than the *common appellation* of those to whom they are applied. Thus it was predicted of Christ, that 'his name should be called Wonderful, Immanuel,' &c., Is. 9. 6, and 7. 14, of which the true interpretation is, that his *nature* should be wonderful, should be Immanuel, &c. So also our Lord says to his disciples, John 15. 15, 'Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends,' i. e. I declare you to be friends. Yet we find that in point of mere nominal appellation they were subsequently called 'friends,' as John 18. 36. So in the present case, it is not so much intended that Jacob's ordinary and familiar title should be superseded, as is evident from the subsequent history, as that he should now be declared to be possessed of a *new character* by the significant designation assigned him. Arab. 'Thy name shall not always be called Jacob only, but Israel likewise.' Hitherto his name Jacob had merely denoted his being a *supplanter* of his brother, but now he had moreover shown himself a *prevailer with God*, in token of which it was proper that the name 'Israel' should be given him, as an honorable testimonial of the fact in all ages. It is to be observed, also, that Jacob's *posterity*, to whom the same name is applied, are so denominated principally upon the ground of their being supposed to be a *praying* and

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name : and he said, • Wherefore is

• Judg. 13. 18.

*prevailing seed*, especially his spiritual seed, Gal. 6. 10, which embraces the Gentiles, who are affiliated by faith. — ¶ *As a prince hast thou power with God*, Heb. שרית *sarîtha*, i. e. thou hast acted the prince ; thou hast carried thyself prince-like. The same word occurs, Hos. 12. 4, 'He had power with God.' Heb. וַיַּסָּר *vayasār*, he was a prince with God. In allusion to this transaction, the Most High says by the Prophet, Is. 45. 19, 'I said not to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain.' The seed of Jacob is specified rather than the seed of Abraham, from this eminent instance of Jacob's praying and prevailing in a season of extremity, and thus carrying an implication that his 'seed' would inherit their father's spirit in this respect. As far, therefore, as Christians constitute the true Israel of God, they should doubtless deem themselves bound to be distinguished for their perseverance and prevaience in prayer. — ¶ *And with man*. Doubtless with a more special reference to his prevailing with Esau in their coming interview, of which, as remarked above, his prevailing with the Angel was a designed earnest and pledge.

29. Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. It cannot be doubted, from the drift of the narrative, that Jacob was aware that his antagonist was a truly divine personage. It was not, therefore, for further satisfaction on this head that he made the present inquiry. Two reasons may be suggested as having, perhaps, prompted the question. (1.) He may have been desirous of knowing how the Lord ought properly to be called. He was usually called 'Elohim' God, and this title Jacob himself had recognised at Bethel, and God also had subsequently confirmed it by saying, 'I am the

God of Bethel.' But when he appeared to Abraham, Gen. 17. 1, and renewed the covenant with him, he denominated himself 'El Shaddai' God all-sufficient, and at other times, he was called simply 'El,' the strong One. But these appellations no longer satisfied the patriarch after his recent experience. He seems to have thought it possible that some other title having a special commemorative reference to this event might be proper, and accordingly wishes to know what it was. But (2.) The import of the question undoubtedly extends beyond the mere name. He wished to have a fuller development in words of that divine nature or character which had displayed itself so wonderfully in act. It is as if he had said, 'Lord, how shall I call thee? I know not what to think, much less to say. Such condescension as thou hast shown me, who am but dust, is more than my heart could have dared to anticipate. I know and confess that thou hast previously appeared wonderful and gracious to Abraham, to Isaac, and to me also. But what is all this compared to what thou hast now done to me? Thou disguisest thyself in human flesh and blood ; thou feignest thyself to be my opponent, in order to do me good ! Thou even wrestlest with me ! Thou grieveest me only to console me ! Thou breakest down all my strength, in order to declare that thou art in my power. Thou givest me a new name, which represents me as the conqueror, and thee as the conquered ; which renders that which is impossible, real. This is too wonderful for me ; I cannot attain unto it. Tell me, what is thy name ?' This we may conceive to have been the drift of his inquiry, and under the comparatively dark dispensation of that early period,

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for ' I have seen

<sup>r</sup> ch. 16. 13. Exod. 24. 11. & 33. 20. Deut. 5. 24.

when the full gospel revelations were not yet made, it was a natural inquiry. In like manner, and from a similar impulse, Manoah, the father of Samson, besought the Angel who 'did wondrously' before him, to tell him his name, i. e. to disclose fully his character; which he ostensibly declined and yet really granted. See Note on Josh. 13. 18. Moses also, Ex. 3. 13, 14, entreated him to tell his name, in order that if the children should inquire as to the name of the God who had sent him, he might be able to give them an answer. To which the Lord replied by giving him an intimation of his *nature*; 'I am that I am.' The answer to Jacob is now to be considered.—¶ *Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.* As far as the letter of Jacob's inquiry is concerned, the Lord refused to answer it; and yet we cannot doubt that the patriarch was favored with what was *equivalent* to a direct and full reply. The truth is, the interrogation itself of the Angel implies that he had ample grounds for drawing the proper inference himself as to the character of the Being with whom he had to do. It was as much as if he had said, 'Canst thou, after such a manifestation, be ignorant who I am?' But it is highly probable, that in addition to this there was something in the blessing now imparted which virtually answered his question. Before, when Jacob implored a blessing, he asked the patriarch's name. Now, on the other hand, when Jacob asked his name, he answers by giving him a blessing. This he was doubtless made to experience internally. His mind was sweetly tranquillized. His former fear departed from his soul, as did the shades of night at that very time before the breaking of the day. A

God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Judg. 6. 22. & 13. 22. Isai. 6. 5.

heavenly peace descended upon his spirit, such as God alone could create. The wild animals, whose roar may have previously grated upon his ear, had retired into their caves, and the birds of heaven were chanting their morning hymn. His painful forebodings had dissolved into confident hope. The thought of threatening Esau and his hosts disturbs him now no more. He may come with his four hundred or four thousand men, if he please; what is that to him? He knows in whom he has believed. His heart is strengthened by the secret succors of the God of all grace, which are far more effectual than words or more literal promises. And what could he desire beyond this ineffable inward calm and confidence, to assure him of the nature and attributes of Him with whom he had contended? His question was answered in the state of his soul.

30. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel.* Heb. פְּנִיֵּל *peniel*, i. e. *face of God*; called also 'Penuel,' v. 31, a word of precisely the same import. Gr. εἶδος Θεοῦ, *the form or aspect of God*. The Lord had blessed Jacob, therefore he let him go. He inwardly felt that though the Lord might visibly disappear from him, yet he remained with him and in him. Such, also, was the case of the disciples at the ascension of Jesus. He departed from them bodily, but spiritually and essentially he remained with them, and in fact continues with us to the end of the world. Of this we are conscious from his Spirit which he hath given us, and from the consequent peace, joy, and power which we are made to experience. The whole affair deserved a memorial. Jacob instituted this by giving a new and suitable name to the place where such a remarkable event



had occurred. But God himself appointed a much more durable one by causing it to be recorded by his servant Moses, and to be called to mind by the prophet Hosea. The patriarch in this acted according to the instinctive promptings of a pious mind. The world abounds with memorable places. The natural man finds those the most interesting where nature manifests herself in peculiar splendor and majesty; where lofty mountains yield delightful prospects, and smiling plains exhibit the blessings of heaven; where majestic rivers roll along, or the wide ocean expands itself before the eye, which seeks in vain its limit. The man of letters and taste lingers with pleasure on the monuments of ancient and modern art, admiring the magnificence of palaces and the productions of painters and sculptors. The historian loses himself in reflection when visiting the scenes of former important events, the sites of powerful cities, and the fields where great battles have been fought. The Christian also has his memorable places. Bethlehem, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Calvary, and the Mount of Olives are among them. Though prone to degenerate into superstition, yet the feeling which prompts the pilgrim foot to wander over these venerable spots springs from a sacred source. These places are Peniels to believers, revelations of the glory of God; since their faith and love draw nutriment from the recollection of what there took place. And has not every Christian beside his particular Peniels, in which God revealed himself to him in an especial manner—his closet, the sanctuary, a book, a sermon, a company, a solitary hour, which continue consecrated in his grateful memory? He surely can enter into the feelings of Jacob on this occasion.—As to the locality itself, it may be remarked, that a city called Penuel was afterward built in this place, the tower of which was demolished by Gideon, because the inhabitants refused him bread when in pursuit of the kings, Judg. 8 17, though subsequently re-edified by Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12. 25. It belonged to the tribe of Gad, was situated on or near the Jordan, Judg. 8. 4, 8, and was 40 miles distant from Jerusalem, in a north-eastern direction.—¶ *I have seen God face to face.* Chal. 'I have seen the Angel of God face to face.' Here we find a complete explanation who it was that wrestled with Jacob, dislocated his thigh, gave him a new name, and blessed him. It was no created Angel, but that divine person, the 'Sent of God,' the Messiah that was to be, who in the fulness of time was really manifested in flesh and blood. If we ask by what it was that Jacob perceived with such certainty that it was a divine person with whom he had to do, we answer, he was assured of it in the same mysterious manner as the weeping Magdalen at the sepulchre was assured by the single word 'Mary!' that it was not the gardener, but Jesus himself, who was communing with her; and as the disciples on the Sea of Tiberias were so perfectly convinced that it was the Lord that none of them needed to ask him, 'Who art thou?' The Christian's conviction is something peculiar. It is a consciousness that it is really so; a certain confidence, which does not, and cannot doubt; whilst, on the contrary, a mere human belief thinks it may be so, or may be otherwise. Jacob's words, however, are not to be understood as contravening our Lord's declaration that 'no man hath seen God at any time.' This refers to his essence, which is intrinsically invisible. This Jacob did not see, but only the human form assumed for the occasion. But there is an inward spiritual seeing of God, far superior to the vision of sense; and this we suppose was the privilege of Jacob at this time. Distinguished light had arisen upon him by means of this conflict, such as he had never possessed before.

31 And as he passed over Penue! the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which

shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

He became much more intimately acquainted with God than previously; even as when we see the face of some one whom we had only known before from report. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that this event constituted a new era in Jacob's spiritual existence.—

¶ *My life is preserved.* These words, contain, perhaps, an allusion to the prevalent opinion that no man could see God and live. But this is not all. He was delivered. His former state was a perilous and oppressive one—without were fightings, and fears within. Esau, with his four hundred men, terrified him. His faith was weak, his courage small; joy had departed from him, and clouds of sorrow darkened his soul, which vented themselves in tears. That night had been the most painful and distressing one he had ever spent; he saw nothing but death before him. It seemed as if God himself had delivered him over to the power of his enemies, in commanding him to return out of Mesopotamia. But now a pleasing reverse had taken place, and he was assured of safety. His confidence in God was quickened, and his whole soul commanded into a conscious security, in which he could look boldly around him. But if we would enter into the full meaning of his words, we must understand them as equivalent to the declaration, 'I am preserved, and shall be preserved.' The Lord had said to him, 'Thou hast had power;' or, perhaps more correctly, 'Thou wilt be enabled to prevail.' Here then is the echo of faith, 'I am and shall be preserved. Although new tribulations may befall me, according to the will of God, yet I shall be preserved, and he will at length deliver me from all evil, and bring me to his

glorious kingdom. Of this I am assured, for I know in whom I have believed.' His subsequent history showed that his confidence was well founded.

31. *As he passed over Penue!, the sun rose upon him, &c.* This splendid spectacle in nature was also an image of what had passed in the soul of the patriarch. The night had disappeared. A lovely morning dawned. It rose upon him. The Sun of Righteousness the Day-spring from on high, had cheered his inward spirit with its inextinguishable beams. Yet he halted upon his thigh. A memento of humility was impressed upon his person. Every step reminded him of the great mercy of the Lord, and yet of his own nothingness. Every step at once exalted and humbled him. And when others heard his new name, and saw his lameness, they also would be reminded that the Most High condescends more graciously to his people than they could ever venture to hope. Our own experience in the divine life must be very small if we are not often taught the same lesson.

32. *Eat not of the sinew which shrank* Or, Heb. נִשְׁחָךְ *nasheh*, which was removed, or which forgot its place. Gr: 'The sinew that was benumbed, or waxed feeble.' We have already remarked that this was the sinew that fastened the thigh-bone in its socket, including, probably, the muscles in the immediate neighborhood. The abstaining from this part of the flesh of slain animals, it seems from this, was a very ancient custom, and we read a good deal of it in the Hebrew canons; but as no mention is made of it in the law of Moses, it is very doubtful whether it rested upon divine authority. Yet it may have received the divine sanction, as being

prompted by pious reverence, and not by motives of mere superstition. At present the Jews do not know what sinew this was, nor even which thigh it was in ; and the effect of this uncertainty is, that they judge it necessary to abstain from both the hind-quarters, lest they should inadvertently eat the interdicted sinew. They sell those parts to Christians.

REMARKS. We are taught by the preceding narrative, (1) *That great trials often befall the people of God when in the way of commanded duty.* God had commanded Jacob to enter upon this journey, and had promised to be with him ; yet what 'fightings without and fears within' came upon him while going forward in the way of duty. True, indeed, the gathering clouds, which seemed to threaten a furious storm, were all graciously dispelled, and succeeded by a delightful sunshine and calm ; yet for the time being he was brought into sore distress, and prompted to say, as he did on a subsequent occasion, 'All these things are against me.' So we are not to infer that because we are walking in the path which our Heavenly Father points out to us, we may therefore promise ourselves exemption from afflictive trials. Indeed, it is not unusual for God to assume most of the character of an enemy towards his children when they are already reduced to the greatest extremities and dangers. It was at such a crisis that the Most High appeared to Jacob as an *antagonist*, and wrestled with him as if with the most hostile intentions. And when did the Saviour himself more bitterly mourn the hidings of his Father's countenance, than at the very time when delivered into the hands of his enemies, and made to feel the pangs of crucifixion ? Let it not be thought strange, then, that our severest outward sufferings should be aggravated by a sense of the divine desertion, even though we may be unconscious of having wandered from God, or of having

particularly offended him. We may be broken with breach upon breach ; one wave of trouble after another may roll over us ; yet let us not sink in discouragement or despair. Let us learn from the case of Jacob that the most signal mercy may be intended for us, even when every thing around us wears the darkest aspect.

(2.) *The surest way of prevailing with man is to prevail with God.* It was thus that Jacob obtained the pledge of prevailing with his brother. Notwithstanding the formidable array in which Esau came against him, yet, having like a prince prevailed with God, he thereby virtually disarmed and vanquished his menacing adversary. This is, in fact, the grand secret of like success in all cases. What is all human power ? It is entirely at the disposal of God, and at our own, so far as by prayer we enlist omnipotence in our behalf. We look abroad, and behold the dangers that threaten ourselves or the church of God ; the enemy coming in like a flood, and our hearts perhaps filled and failing with trepidation. Let us betake ourselves to our closets, and wrestle in fervent prayer with God, who has the spirits of all flesh under his control. Let us have truly the faith and fervency of *wrestling Jacobs*, and we may come forth and conclude the work is done. These earnest agonizing supplications, coupled with a uniformly meek and blameless deportment, will assuredly give us the mastery in the end over all opposition, and crown us with the honors of *prevailing Israels*.

(3.) *Prevailing at last will recompense all our striving.* Jacob continued long in wrestling, even until the dawn of day, and perhaps was at times prompted to give over the contest. But how richly did the mercy repay his perseverance ! He then saw what he would have lost had he not vigorously held out to the end. So with us. The blessing obtained will pay for all our toil.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

AND Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, <sup>a</sup> Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids

<sup>2</sup> And he put the handmaids and

<sup>a</sup> ch. 32. 6.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

THE chapter before us describes the meeting between the brothers, in reference to which the events related in the preceding chapter tended to create a deep anxiety. But as we there saw how Jacob had power with God, we here discern how he had power with man, according to the promise, ch. 32. 28. He who by a touch disjointed Jacob's thigh, could, by a word, have scattered Esau's hosts. But we are called to witness a more signal interposition of heaven. He who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and turns them as the rivers of water are turned, accompanies and blesses, by his secret, softening influences, the conciliatory measures of Jacob, and fills the alienated heart of Esau with kind and brotherly feelings. How different a result from that which we at first anticipated! They meet, they converse, they love as brethren! We can only express our admiration at the wonderful power and goodness which thus wrought effectually in the heart of an angry man, converting his long-harbored hatred towards Jacob into the most sincere and tender affection. Instead of an angry and hostile encounter we behold a contention of kindness! All revengeful sentiments, all cruel purposes melted away in the endearments of fraternal love! Let the proud and the vindictive contemplate this delightful scene, and say whether it be possible for any gratification of private resentment, any triumph of malicious passion, to yield such pure satisfaction, such hal-

their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

<sup>3</sup> And he passed over before them, and <sup>b</sup> bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 18. 2. & 42. 6. & 43. 26.

lowed joy, as that which filled the bosoms of these now reconciled brethren.

1. *And Jacob lifted up his eyes, &c.* With what emotions he had before looked forward to the interview, we learn from the preceding chapter, v. 7, where we are told that even at the bare mention of Esau's threatened visit he was 'greatly afraid and distressed.' But now, as the historian relates, 'he looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men,' but not a word of his fear. He was now sufficiently strong in faith to say with the Psalmist, 'Though an host should encamp against me, yet will I not be afraid.' He no longer trembled at the issue, and yet we find that he omitted none of those wise precautions which, before receiving the tokens of the divine blessing, he had determined to adopt. With the most wary policy he carries all his measures into effect.—<sup>†</sup> *Handmaids.* Chal. 'Concubines,' as one of them is called Gen. 35. 22.

2. *Rachel and Joseph hindermost.* As these were the most dear to him, he stationed them at the point of apparently the least danger. Or it may be that he purposed to reserve his choicest treasure to the last, and exhibit his beautiful Rachel and his favorite Joseph, after Esau had seen all the rest, in order to make the deeper impression on his mind.

3. *Bowed himself to the ground seven times*; i. e. many times; a definite number for an indefinite. See note on Gen. 31. 7. Thus, 1 Sam. 2. 5, 'The barren

4 \* And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, <sup>d</sup> and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

5 And he lifted up his eyes, and

• ch. 32. 28.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 45. 14, 15.

hath borne *seven*; i. e. many. Prov. 26. 27, 'Believe him not, for there are *seven* abominations in his heart'; i. e. a great many. Ps. 119. 164, '*Seven* times a day do I praise thee'; i. e. many times. 'This seems to mean that Jacob, on approaching his brother, stopped at intervals and bowed, and then advanced and bowed again, until the seventh bow brought him near to his brother. This was a mark of profound respect; nor need we suppose there was any simulation of humility in it, for it was, and is, customary for elder brothers to be treated by the younger with great respect in the East. A similar method of indicating respect is still used in approaching the king of Persia, and has been thus described by Colonel Johnson:—'We saw the king seated upon his throne, in an upper room, open and supported by pillars. When we came to the end of the walk turning toward and fronting the king, we made two low bows, as did also the minister, whose motions we observed and repeated; then advancing to the first cross-walk, we made another bow; proceeding thence until we arrived within about fifty yards of the building, we again halted and made two bows. Here we took off and left our slippers, and walked in the cloth boots to another turning, and bowed again. We now came to a small door, from which a flight of steps led up to the open room. These were covered with blue glazed tiles. At the head of the stairs was the door of the king's sitting-room, on advancing to which, fronting the king, we made two bows, rather low, and severally entered the room, keeping close to the wall on the left. When we had taken our stations

saw the women and the children, and said, Who *are* those with thee? And he said, The children • which God hath graciously given thy servant.

• ch. 48. 9. Ps. 127. 3. Isai. 8. 18.

here, we each made a very low bow, and ranged ourselves standing.' (Journey from India to England, p. 166.) Here there were six pauses and nine bows: the number of both diminishes with the increase of rank in the person admitted to an audience.' *Pict. Bible*.

4. *Fell on his neck, and kissed him, &c.* How remarkable the issue of this long-anticipated trouble! What a delightful termination to all Jacob's anxieties and fears! And how much in it to instruct, to encourage, and to establish the Christian! Who of this class cannot sympathize in Jacob's apprehensions and in Jacob's deliverance? Have we never beheld at a distance some calamity or trial, the approach of which was so appalling that we scarce dared to realize it, and yet so certain that we knew it to be inevitable? And have not our faithless hearts almost persuaded us that it was in vain even to pray against it; that it was 'hoping against hope' to expect deliverance? And yet how often has the event been mercifully overruled, and the cloud, apparently black with overwhelming tempest, made to burst in blessings on our heads! If so, why should not the review of the past fortify us against all gloomy forebodings of the future?

5. *Who are these with thee?* Heb. *מי אלה לך* *mi elleh lak*, who are these to thee? i. e. in what relation do they stand to thee?—¶ And he said, *The children, &c.* As Esau's question had respect not to the children only, but to the women also, it is but fair to include both in the import of Jacob's answer. As in Gen. 29. 3, 'flocks' does by implication include 'shepherds,' so here, in like manner, 'children' virtually includes

6 Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

7 And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves; and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

'women,' or 'wives.' We cannot fail to notice in this reply Jacob's habitual recognition of the hand of God in the ordinary concerns of life. He acknowledges that God had not only given, but graciously given, him all the children which now stood before his brother. It is one of the signal effects of a truly devout spirit to discern the present direct operation of divine power and goodness, where the mass of men discover only the working of the established laws of nature.

6. *The hand-maidens came near—and bowed themselves.* One cannot help observing how strikingly the deportment of Jacob's family was in unison with his own. Thus Esau would perceive that all his brother's people, as well as himself, were ready to do him reverence. Had any of them failed in this respect, it might have counteracted all the good effects of his own ingratiating conduct. How happy is it when the example of the head of a family is worthy to be followed, and is followed! Had Esau been possessed of Jacob's spirit, he could hardly have refrained from saying, when the companies thus presented themselves, 'The Lord be gracious unto you, my children!' But Esau appears to have been less susceptible to those more refined emotions, those courtesies of the Spirit; and we may rejoice that his reception of them was as kind as it was. We often have occasion to be thankful for civilities, where we find nothing like religion.

7. *And after came Joseph near and Rachel.* In the former clause Leah is mentioned before her children, but here

8 And he said, What *meanest* thou by 'all this drove which I met? And he said, *These are* to find grace in the sight of my lord.

9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

r ch. 32. 16.

s ch. 32. 5.

Joseph is named before Rachel, to indicate the high place which he held in his father's affections.

8. *What meanest thou by all this drove,* &c. Heb. *כל המנהג הזה מה לך* *mileka kol hammahaneh hazzeh, what (is) all this camp to thee?*—alluding to the drove which had been sent on before, and which, with its drivers, seemed like the entire *encampment* of a nomade family. The answer is, 'To find grace in the sight of my lord.' This would express how high a value he set upon his favor, and how much he desired to be reconciled to him. Of course nothing would more directly tend to conciliate him. The title, 'my lord,' with which he salutes him, and which he studiously repeats in the following conversation, was no doubt more efficacious than the present itself, in winning his heart. It would go to satisfy him that his object was not to claim that kind of pre-eminence upon which he himself appears to have set so high a price, as it teaches us the propriety of conceding all that we can to others for the sake of making or preserving peace, and smoothing the intercourse of life. The Christian's inheritance will leave him riches enough, and his prerogatives honor enough, after all the abatements that his generosity prompts him to make.

9. *Keep that thou hast unto thyself.* Heb. *ידיך לך אשר לך* *yehi leka asher lak, let that be to thee which is thine.* Chal. 'Much good may it do thee, that which is thine.' No doubt a high spirit of independence breathed through this answer of Esau. Whatever effect Jacob's present had had upon him, he

10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand : for therefore I <sup>b</sup> have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

11 Take, I pray thee, <sup>i</sup> my blessing that is brought to thee ; because God hath dealt graciously with me,

<sup>b</sup> ch. 43. 3. <sup>2</sup> Sam. 3. 13. & 14. 24, 28, 32. Matt. 18. 10. <sup>i</sup> Judg. 1. 15. 1 Sam. 25. 27. & 30. 26. <sup>2</sup> Kings, 5. 15.

would not be thought to be influenced by any motive of that kind in his treatment of the donor ; especially as he professes to have enough of his own. His possessions were to be earthly and temporal, and with them his spirit corresponded.

10. *Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, &c.* Notwithstanding his refusal. Jacob continues to urge his present upon him, not as if he thought he needed it, but as a token of his good will, and of his desire to be reconciled. He did not, indeed, make use of this term, nor of any other that might lead to the recollection of their former variance. He did not say that he should consider the acceptance of his present as a proof that he was cordially reconciled to him ; but what he did say, though more delicately expressed, was to the same effect ; and his anxiety on this head will be at once explained by a reference to Eastern customs. 'Not to receive a present, is at once to show that the thing desired will not be granted. Hence, nothing can be more repulsive, nothing more distressing, than to return the gifts to the giver. Jacob evidently labored under this impression, and therefore pressed his brother to receive the gifts, if he had found favor in his sight.' *Roberts*.—¶ *Therefore have I seen thy face, &c.* We have already given, ch. 32. 24, what we conceive to be the true import of these words, and to that explanation we refer the reader. We can understand it only

and because I have enough ; <sup>\*</sup> and he urged him, and he took it.

12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children *are* tender, and the flocks and herds with young *are* with me, and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die.

<sup>\*</sup> 2 Kings 5. 23.

in allusion to the mystical encounter with the Angel, whose face or person he beheld as the representative of Esau, and in whose propitiousness towards him he read a pledge of Esau's own favorable regard. What other sense can be assigned to the expression, 'Thou wast pleased with me,' than that he was pleased in the person who represented him ? Yet it is not necessary to suppose that Jacob's language was intelligible in its full extent to Esau.

11. *Take my blessing.* That is, my gift ; which will be a source of blessing to thee. From this the usage became common, of denominating *a gift*, or *an act of liberality*, 'a blessing.' Thus, 1 Sam. 25. 27, 'And now this *blessing*, which thine handmaid hath brought ;' i. e. this *gift*. 2 Kings 5. 15, 'Now, therefore, I pray thee, take a *blessing* of thy servant' 2 Cor. 9. 5, 'That they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your *bounty*.' Gr. 'Your *blessing*.'—¶ *I have enough.* The expression is rendered in our version in the same way with that of Esau, v. 9, but they differ in the original. Esau says יש לי רב *yesh li rab*, *I have much* ; but Jacob יש לי כול *yesh li kol*, *I have all*. 'Jacob had all, because he had the God of all.' *Trapp*.

12, 13. *Let us take our journey, &c.* Esau here proposes to accompany his brother through the country, not only in token of his cordial reconciliation, but also as a kind of escort or guard to him and

his family. The proposal was doubtless very friendly and very honorable, but Jacob very wisely declines it. We say wisely, for, notwithstanding their present amity, they were so essentially different in their spirit, habits, manners, and occupations, that in all probability little happiness would have accrued from their intimate association. Esau, as we have seen, was a man of the world, Jacob a man of God. Still they were brothers, and children of the same parents; it was unquestionably their duty to know, and to love, and to be kindly affectioned one towards another; but they were not called upon to live in the closest bonds of intimacy, to travel in the same road, or to intermingle in the same company. Jacob was therefore discreet in resolutely declining the offer of Esau. He would do better to pursue his journey alone, refusing even the retinue with which Esau would have honored him, and which would have ill assorted with the plain and simple manners of the patriarch. They might properly embrace for a few moments, or act affectionately for a passing hour; but if they had attempted to *sojourn* together, the enmity so early planted between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, would in all likelihood have broken forth. Esau would once more have hated Jacob, or the spiritually-minded man of God have been drawn from his allegiance by his more worldly-minded brother. The Scriptures are full of examples where the want of such prudence as Jacob now manifested has produced these unhappy effects; and not the Scriptures only, but the world also, teems with illustrations of the same kind. Christians are indeed commanded, in virtue of their holy calling, to 'seek peace and ensue it;' 'as much as lieth in them to live peaceably with all men;' but they are *not* commanded to unite companies, to contract intimacies, to league themselves closely with any, but such 'as

are of the household of faith.' Daily experience demonstrates, by the broken friendships, the unhappy intimacies, and the miserable marriages which abound, the truth of the sacred maxim, that 'two cannot walk together except they be agreed.' Scarcely any thing is more dangerous or entangling to Christians, especially to youthful Christians, than close alliances with those who cannot fully appreciate the motives from which they act; who can but little sympathize in their hopes and joys, their troubles and fears. From an amiable desire of conciliating the good-will, or perhaps of being useful to those with whom they associate, they are apt to begin by giving up what they consider the non-essentials of religion; but as they advance they find that one concession makes way for another, till, partaking with them first in what is indifferent, or perhaps in itself innocent, they are gradually led on to things that are inexpedient, and finally to that which is absolutely sinful. Let us watch, then, with ceaseless vigilance, against all undue compliances of this nature, and, while kind and courteous to all, remember that we are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a holy priesthood, ordained to shine as lights in the world, and to benefit it rather by forsaking its dominant course than following it.—¶ *My lord knoweth that the children are tender.* There is no reason to doubt that the motive here alleged by Jacob for declining his brother's invitation was a true and real one, and as such it was strikingly expressive of his gentleness as a shepherd and his tenderness as a father. Yet it is not to be questioned that other considerations, which he did not see fit to mention, were prevalent in his own mind against it. We are not required, in accounting to the world for our declining their overtures, to state *all* the reasons which govern our decisions. It is enough if we can state those which will satisfy their judgment without offending their self-love.



14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant : and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure ; until I come unto my lord <sup>1</sup> unto Seir.

15 And Esau said, Let me now

<sup>1</sup> ch. 32. 3.

—¶ *With young.* The original עֲלֵי־אֹלוֹת *aloth*, signifies both those which are 'great with young,' as Ps. 71. 71, and those which actually *have* young, as 1 Sam. 6. 7, where the phrase '*milch* kine,' is the same as that here rendered 'with young.' Chal. 'Giving suck.' —¶ *Are with me.* Heb. עָלַי *alai*, (are) *upon me* ; i. e. are devolved upon my care ; their welfare rests with me. —¶ *If men should over-drive them, &c.* 'Their flocks,' says Chardin, speaking of those who now live in the East after the patriarchal manner, 'feed down the places of their encampments so quick, by the great numbers which they have, that they are obliged to remove them too often, which is very destructive to their flocks, on account of the young ones, which have not strength enough to follow.'

14. *I will lead on softly.* Heb. אֶתְנַהֵלֶּה לְאֵטִי *ethnahaleh leitti*, *I will gently lead—softly* ; a very emphatic phrase as applied to the office of a shepherd, and apparently alluded to in the parallel expression of the prophet, Is. 40. 11, speaking of Christ as the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls ; 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead (יִנְהֵל *yennehal*) those that are with young.' —¶ *According as the cattle and the children be able to endure.* Heb. 'According to the foot of the work—and according to the foot of the children.' That is, according to the *pace* of the cattle and children, or according to the rate at which they were

leave with thee *some* of the folk that *are* with me : And he said, What needeth it ? <sup>m</sup> Let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

16 ¶ So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 34. 11. & 47. 25. Ruth. 2. 13.

naturally able to go without being unduly pushed. Gr. 'According to the leisure of the progress.' Cattle are here by a figure of speech called '*work*' because they were the *objects of work*, because Jacob's labor was bestowed in feeding and tending them. See Note on ch. 31. 17, 18, where the eastern mode of travelling is fully described. —¶ *Until I come, &c.* From which it would seem that he then had the idea of visiting Esau at his residence in Mount Seir ; but we do not learn from his subsequent history that he ever actually fulfilled this intention. He may have been providentially prevented, as Paul was from taking his proposed journey into Spain, Rom. 15. 34. Yet the silence of the sacred writer is not proof positive that the visit was never made. We have no express account of his visiting his father Isaac for several years after his return to Canaan, and yet we cannot but admit a strong presumption that he did, especially as we find Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, in Jacob's family at the time of her death, whither she had doubtless been transferred from Isaac's.

15. *Let me now leave with thee, &c.* Heb. אֶצִּיגֶה *atzigah*, *I will place, station, set.* Esau's first proposal being declined, he next offers to leave a part of his men as an escort or guard to Jacob's company. But this also he respectfully declines, on the ground of its being unnecessary ; adding 'Let me find grace in the sight of my lord,' which is probably tantamount to saying, 'Let me have thy favor, and it is all I desire.' 'ר. 'It is enough that I have found grace in thy

17 And Jacob journeyed to <sup>a</sup> Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle : there-fore the name of the place is called Succoth.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. 13. 27.

sight.' The spirit of piety shrinks from the thought of subjecting friends to unnecessary trouble; and how little do they need a convoy of creatures who are enabled to assure themselves, with Jacob, of the constant presence and protection of Jehovah?

17. *Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house.* 'Dr. Boothroyd concurs in this rendering; but we consider that the phrase translated 'built him a house,' means no more than that Jacob erected his tent at this place. We have already indicated the usage of calling a tent a house (note on ch. 27. 15), and we find that Gesenius concurs in the opinion, that the word בֵּית *beth* certainly means a tent in this place. The very name given to the place, which means 'tents' or 'booths,' and the fact that Jacob made no long stay there and never returned, would alone suffice to render it probable that this is the true meaning. It seems to be recorded as a singular circumstance, that Jacob erected booths for his cattle. His motive does not appear; but it was, and is, unusual in the East to put the flocks and herds under cover. They remain night and day, winter and summer, in the open air. The number of booths necessary for the purpose must have given a singular appearance to his encampment, occasioning the circumstance to be commemorated in the name given to the spot, and to the town which was built there at a subsequent period. The maps place Succoth south of the Jabbok, in the angle formed by this river and the Jordan, and at a distance nearly equal from either river. It was included in the territories of the tribe of Gad. The inhabitants provoked Gideon in the

16\*

18 ¶ And he came to <sup>o</sup> Shalem, a city of <sup>p</sup> Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

<sup>o</sup> John 3. 23. <sup>p</sup> Josh. 24. 1. Judg. 9. 1.

same way as the men of Penuel had done, and in revenge he, on his return, 'tore the flesh' of the principal persons of the town with thorns and briars. The Jews say that the name of Darala was given to Succoth at some subsequent period.' *Pict. Bible.*

18. *And Jacob came to Shalem.* Heb. שָׁלֵם *shalem*. It so happens that the original word is the same with that signifying *well, whole, safe, in peace*; and consequently it is so rendered by the Chal. and several of the other ancient versions, implying that Jacob arrived at Sechem *safe* and *unharméd* as it respected his apprehended danger from Esau. The Gr., on the other hand, renders the passage like the Eng. version, as the name of a city. It might possibly have been the place afterwards called Salim, near Enon, where John baptized, John 3. 23; but as there is a difficulty in understanding how this could be called 'a city of Shechem,' the weight of opinion among commentators preponderates in favor of the former rendering; and in this we on the whole concur. This rendering also gives additional propriety and force to the phrase 'when he came from Padan-aram.' It is a declaration to the honor of him who had said, 'Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.' He arrived *in peace* at his journey's end, notwithstanding all the difficulties and dangers which had threatened him in the way. It would seem that Jacob's original intention was to have passed round the Dead Sea, through the province of Seir, the country of Esau, without crossing the Jordan, perhaps with a view to return to Beer-sheba, the resi-

19 And 'he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Ha-

Josh. 24. 32. John 4. 5.

dence of Isaac; though even in that case his route was extremely circuitous; but, for reasons not disclosed, he suddenly altered his course, and passing the Jordan, penetrated at once into the land of Canaan.

19. *And he bought a parcel of a field.* Or, as the Heb. might with equal propriety be rendered, 'a portion of the country.' This field, it seems, Gen. 48. 22, was taken from him by the Amorites, and he was under the necessity of recovering it 'by his sword and his bow;' after accomplishing which he bequeathed it to his son Joseph. The transaction has doubtless something of a singular air, as the whole land was made over to Abraham and his descendants by promise; but he probably made the purchase under the influence of the same motives which governed Abraham himself in purchasing the field and cave of Machpelah, viz. as a pledge of his faith in the future possession of the land. Nor is the remark of Fuller on this passage without weight; 'I have sometimes thought that this parcel of ground might be designed to exhibit a specimen of the whole land of Canaan. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, Deut. 32. 8, he marked out an allotment for the children of Israel; but the Canaanites taking possession, of it were obliged to be dispossessed by the rightful owners with the sword and the bow.'—*¶ For a hundred pieces of money.* Heb. קֶשֶׁתָּהּ *kesitah*, *lamb*, but here to be rendered in the plur. 'lambs,' by which is probably meant a kind of coin with the image of a lamb stamped upon it. The phrase is entirely similar to the usage among ourselves when we speak of 'a hundred eagles;' meaning thereby a hundred

pieces of the coin so denominated. 'The primitive race of men being shepherds, and their wealth consisting in their cattle, in which Abraham is said to have been rich, for greater convenience metals were substituted for the commodity itself. It was natural for the representative sign to bear impressed the object which it represented; and thus, accordingly, the earliest coins were stamped with the figure of an ox or a sheep.'

20 And he erected there an altar, and <sup>r</sup> called it El-Elohe-Israel.

<sup>r</sup> ch. 35. 7.

*Maurice Ind. Antiquities.* Thus the ancient Athenians had a coin called *βοῦς* *ox*, because it was stamped with the image of an ox. Hence the saying in *Æschylus*, *Agam. v. 30*, 'I must be silent concerning other matters; a great ox walks upon my tongue;' implying that he had received a *bribe* for secrecy. Thus, too, the Latin word for *money*, *pecunia*, is derived from *pecus*, *cattle*, from the image stamped upon it. The custom no doubt arose from the fact that in primitive times the coin was the ordinary value of the animal whose image it bore.

20. *Erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe Israel.* That is, 'God, the God of Israel.' Having at length fixed upon a place of a somewhat permanent residence, the patriarch, after the pious example of Abraham and Isaac, again establishes the public worship of God. For although we must believe that wherever they were they were strict in the discharge of the more private duties of religion, yet they seem to have felt themselves called to a more open and formal recognition of Jehovah in all cases where a more fixed abode rendered it practicable. This was important, not only in order to preserve the leaven of piety in his family, which might otherwise be in danger of relapsing into the general

## CHAP. XXXIV.

AND <sup>a</sup> Dinah, the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Ja-

<sup>a</sup> ch. 30. 21.

heathenism, but also to testify most effectually against the corrupt systems of worship by which he was surrounded. Though the Shechemites and the neighboring nations doubtless had altars, yet Jacob refused to worship upon them, and by setting up one of his own, distinctly proclaimed that he acknowledged and served another God, and would have no fellowship with their vile idolatries. This was a conduct worthy of the pious patriarch after the many signal deliverances he had experienced. It was a kind of preliminary dedication of the land of promise to God.' It was as if he had taken possession of it in the name of the God of Israel, by setting up his standard in it, and said, 'Whenever this whole country shall come into the hands of my posterity, let it in this manner be devoted to God. It is the first time also, in which he is represented as availing himself of his *new name*, and of the *covenant blessing* conferred upon him under it. The name given to the altar was no doubt designed to be a memorial of both; and whenever he should present his offerings upon it, it would tend to revive all those sentiments which he had felt when wrestling with God at Peniel. In like manner it were well for us if every important event in our lives were distinguished by renewed resignations of ourselves to God. Such times and places would serve as memorials of mercy, and enable us to recover those thoughts and feelings which we experienced in our happiest days.

## CHAP. XXXIV.

The arrival of Jacob, after an absence of more than twenty years, in the land of Canaan, promised fair for a holy and happy residence in it. A guardian providence had protected and delivered

cob, <sup>b</sup> went out to see the daughters of the land.

<sup>b</sup> Tit. 2. 5.

him from his avowed enemies, from Laban, and from Esau. He had purchased an estate, he had spread his tent, he had erected his altar, and apparently his 'mountain stood strong.' But alas! the removal of foreign troubles is quickly succeeded by domestic ones; and we are called to contemplate the patriarch under a greater affliction than any of which the record has heretofore been given. His only daughter, prompted by female vanity, curiosity, or some other motive equally censurable, ventures unattended beyond the verge of parental superintendence, and falls a victim to her temerity! But it was not only the blighted innocence and blasted character of Dinah that made the heart of Jacob to bleed. A wound, no less deep, was inflicted by the treachery and the barbarity of his sons Levi and Simeon, in the execution of their bloody purpose of revenge. Surely the waters of a full cup are wrung out to the aged patriarch. The lives of few men on record present a greater complication of distress than fell to the lot of Jacob. As a son, a servant, a husband, a father, in youth, in manhood, in old age, he is unremittingly afflicted. No sooner is one difficulty surmounted, one woe past, than another and a greater overtakes him. How justly and how affectingly does the poor old man at last close the bitter recapitulation of his misfortunes by saying, 'All these things are against me!' But we come to the consideration of the details.

1. *And Dinah—went out to see the daughters of the land.* Gr. *καταμαθεῖν* to know; learn, become acquainted with, in other words, to converse their manners, customs, and fashions. Josephus in speaking of this event says, 'Now as the Shechemites were keeping a festi-

2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, <sup>c</sup> saw her, he <sup>d</sup> took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 6. 2. Judg. 14. 1.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 20. 2.

val, Dinah went into the city to see the finery of the women of the country.' This may possibly have been the occasion of her going out, but from Scriptural usage we rather infer that the words imply not a single instance of going out, but that she did it repeatedly, that she was *in the habit of going out*. On these visits she had attracted the notice of Shechem, who, by often seeing and meeting with her, had at length conceived a passion for her, which he was led to abuse to the vilest purposes. The circumstances must have been peculiar indeed, to lead to such a result on a first interview, especially when we consider what is said of Shechem's subsequent attachment. A sudden deed of violence of this kind would be but little apt to give rise to a genuine and permanent affection, and yet such an affection he appears to have entertained for Dinah. If our view of the matter be correct, the evil had not been one of sudden but of gradual, and perhaps scarcely perceptible growth; and it affords a melancholy illustration of the truth, that in relation to morals there are scarcely any actions that are trifling and insignificant. The greatest private and public calamities, when traced up to their proper source, are often found to commence in some little error, inadvertence, or folly, which at the time may have been overlooked or neglected. Yet nothing is trifling that is fraught with momentous consequences; and it is no doubt true, that from the first transgression down to the present day, female disgrace and ruin have, in thousands of instances, begun in the seemingly harmless desire to see and to be seen. It was to the gratification of the vain and idle wish to see something new that

3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

Dinah fell a sacrifice. Her curiosity was indulged at the expence of her virtue and her peace. Nor at this time is the danger to female innocence from this source at all diminished. The only wisdom is in keeping within the bounds of due restraint. Let the habit be formed of lightly forsaking the sanctuary of *home*, and human foresight cannot set limits to the possible or probable consequences. Many a broken heart, and many a weeping family, bear witness to the perils of going heedlessly beyond the bounds of the tutelary influences of a mother's eye, or a father's or brother's care.—The events related in this chapter could not have happened till Jacob had lived six or seven years in the neighborhood of Shechem; for in a less time than this the two brothers could not have arrived at man's estate, nor Dinah herself have attained a marriageable age.

2. *When Shechem the son of Hamor, &c.* His being the prince, or the son of the prince, of the country, no doubt gave him advantages for accomplishing his purpose, of which he did not fail to avail himself. In the eyes of an artless, inexperienced girl, professions coming from such a source would have more effect, and, unhappily, men of rank and opulence are too apt to think themselves entitled to do any thing to which their inclination prompts them.—¶ *Defiled her.* Heb. יַעֲנֶה *yaenneh*, *humbled her*; a word similarly applied elsewhere, as Deut. 21. 14. Judg. 19. 24. 2 Sam. 13. 12, 14. Ezek. 22. 10, 11.

3, 4. *And his soul clave unto Dinah, &c.* The possession of its object, instead of extinguishing, served but to increase the passion of Shechem; and though his proposal of honorable mar-

4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.

5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the

• Judg. 14. 2.

riage did not wipe away the stain of guilt from his character as a seducer, yet it was not only soothing to her, but tended in some degree to repair the wrong done to her and to her family. Indeed, if we except the leading step in this transaction, the conduct of the young prince was generous and noble throughout, and such as loudly to reprove the cool, cruel, remorseless seducers of a christian age, who often leave the hapless victim of their artifices to shame, wretchedness, and despair. Still the sequel shows that nothing could retrieve the mischief of the first false step. That which was done last ought to have been first; and because it was not, the delinquent must suffer. A willingness to make amends for sin will not avert its legitimate consequences.—¶ *Spake kindly unto the damsel.* Heb. ידבר על לב *yedabber al leb speak to the heart*; i. e. spake in a manner calculated to soothe, comfort, and console; Chal. 'Spake consolations to the heart.' Vulg. 'Comforted her with sweet words.' Thus, Is. 40. 2, 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.' Heb. 'Speak to the heart of.' Hos. 2. 14, 'I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.' Heb. 'Speak to her heart.' So where in the Gr. of John 11. 19, it is said that 'many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother,' the Syr. renders it 'came to speak with their hearts concerning their brother.'—¶ *Get me this damsel to wife.* From this it appears that even among the heathen of that period children were in the habit of consulting their parents in reference to the choice of a wife.

field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

6 ¶ And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

7 And the sons of Jacob came

† 1 Sam. 10. 27. 2 Sam. 13. 22.

5. *And Jacob heard, &c.* The news of his daughter's dishonor and detention soon reached the ears of Jacob, and as a father and a saint he could not but feel deeply; yet we are told that he 'held his peace, till his sons returned; by which is meant, not that he was entirely silent, saying nothing about it in his family, which would be inconceivable under the circumstances, but that he took no measures in respect to it, he forbore all action. This is the sense of the original term in several other passages, denoting rather a *refraining from action* than from *utterance*, equivalent to *remaining still, quiet, inert*. Thus, Ex. 14. 14, 'The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (תחרישון);' i. e. be quiet. 2 Kings 19. 11, 'Why are ye the last (אחרונים) to bring the king back from his house?' i. e. why are ye remiss or negligent in bringing, &c. Ps. 83. 1, 'Keep not thou silence, O God; hold not thy peace (אל תחריש), and be not still, O God;' i. e. do not forbear to act. Ps. 50. 3, 'Our God shall come and shall not keep silence (אל יחריש);' i. e. shall not remain inactive. But Jacob did not foresee the issue, or he would probably have taken the affair into his own hands, and acted upon it at once. As it was, however, he did better in thus 'ruling his spirit' than did his sons who took the city. Prov. 16. 32.—¶ *His sons were with his cattle in the field.* Probably at the distance of one or two days' journey, as it was then customary to take a wide range in the pasturage of cattle, and as we have seen before, *field* is synonymous with *extensive tract of country*.

6, 7. *And Hamor went out, &c.* Accompanied by his son Shechem, as ap

out of the field when they heard it : and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had

• ch. 49. 7. 2 Sam. 13. 21. • Josh. 7. 15. Judg. 20. 6.

pears from v. 11. It had been well if he and Jacob had settled it, and this to all appearance they might have done, had it not been for the sudden return of the young men, who seem to have come upon the parties, all glowing with resentment, while they were engaged in the negotiation. This was unfortunate. Had Jacob and Hamor conversed the matter over by themselves, or Jacob and his sons by themselves, their anger might have been abated, and the whole affair perhaps amicably adjusted. But all meeting together, the expression of their inward feelings in their full force was suppressed; and such feelings when suppressed, like the subterranean fires, will find some outlet, and most commonly issue in a fearful explosion. Such was the case in the present instance. Though the young men said but little, yet a deep smothered indignation is implied in the words which describe their emotions. — ¶ *Were grieved.* Heb. יִתְצַבּוּ *yithatzebu*, vexed, pained, afflicted. Gr. *karavynonav*, were pricked in their hearts; the same word that occurs Acts 2. 37, 'When they heard this they were pricked (*karavynonav*) in their hearts, and said unto Peter,' &c., though, of course, the nature of the feelings in the two cases was not the same, the hearts of the one class being pierced with *resentment*, of the other with *compunction*. — ¶ *Because he had wrought folly in Israel.* Rather, 'Because folly had been wrought in Israel;' the active for the passive, an idiom already explained. See Note on Gen. 16. 14. This is the first instance on record where the family of Jacob is designated by the distinguished patronymic title of 'Israel,' which afterwards became the dominant appellation

wrought folly in Israel, in lying with Jacob's daughter; 'which thing ought not to be done.

• Deut. 23. 17. 2 Sam. 13. 12.

of his posterity. The word 'folly' in Scriptural usage, implies not so much a conduct marked by stupidity, simplicity, or weakness of intellect, as an act, or series of actions, of shameless turpitude committed against the Divine precept, attended with scandal and perpetrated with a reckless indifference to consequences. The 'fool' of the Scriptures, therefore, is not by interpretation a *simpleton*, but a *sinner*; and 'folly,' instead of *mental infirmity*, is *moral delinquency*, and that of an aggravated character. This remark should be especially borne in mind in reading the book of Proverbs. It is not unlikely that from the present example the phraseology here employed became proverbially applied to express the same sinful conduct. Thus Tamar replied to her brother Amnon, 2 Sam. 13. 12, 'Nay, my brother, for no such thing *ought to be done in Israel*: do not thou this *folly*. Thou shalt be as one of the *fools in Israel*!' Deut. 22. 21, 'They shall stone her with stones that she die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel.' It cannot be doubted that there was cause for great displeasure; and provided it had been directed against the sin, frankly avowed, and kept within due limits, great displeasure ought to have been manifested. To take advantage of a thoughtless, unprotected female, and consummate her ruin, was inexpressibly base. It was destroying the happiness not of one individual only, but of a whole family. That her seducer endeavored afterwards to repair the wrong, is true; but, as in all similar cases, the injury was absolutely irreparable; and therefore we do not wonder that it excited a deep resentment in the breasts of her dishonored relatives. But their resentment was

8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

9 And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto

faulty in assuming the character of a bloody vindictiveness. It was proper that they should be *grieved*; it was not unnatural that they should be *wroth*; and it was much to their honor that they were disposed to brand the violator of chastity with infamy, and to speak of it as a 'folly which ought not to be done;' for heathen and wicked men in all ages have been prone to account it but a trifling offence. But was it for the sin committed against God, or only for the shame visited upon the family, that they were enraged? Here, alas, they failed; and their failure here paved the way for their subsequent atrocious wickedness—a conduct which elicited from the dying lips of their father the prophetic denunciation, Gen. 49, 7, 'Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.'

8. *And Hamor communed with them, saying, &c.* There is an air of candid, friendly, upright, and generous dealing in the proposals of Hamor, that strongly wins upon us. They indicate a disposition to make an honorable reparation of the injury done to Jacob and his family, and we would fain hope that his terms might be acceded to, and the disgrace thus obliterated as far as possible, forever. But on a closer inspection, we perceive that there was something wrong in the line of conduct pursued by Hamor and Shechem. (1.) The outrage of the son had been of a very aggravated character, and such as merited a severe punishment. But it does not appear from the narrative that either Hamor or the men of Shechem had once

us, and take our daughters unto you.

10 And ye shall dwell with us: and <sup>k</sup> the land shall be before you: dwell and <sup>l</sup> trade ye therein, and <sup>m</sup> get you possessions therein.

<sup>k</sup> ch. 13. 9. & 20. 15. <sup>l</sup> ch. 42. 34.  
<sup>m</sup> ch. 47. 27.

thought of passing any censure or penalty upon the offender, nor is a word of apology or regret expressed to Jacob on the score of what had happened. (2.) They still detained Dinah, who ought at once to have been restored to her parents. Till they had done this, they had no reason to expect any thing like reconciliation on the part of Jacob or his sons. But it is probable that the young man's being of so honorable a family, and the sin of which he was guilty so common in the country, made them think these punctilios might be dispensed with in the present instance. And being wholly under the influence of sensual and worldly motives, they are prepared to profess any religion, or profane any institution, however sacred, so they can accomplish their selfish ends. From these causes, therefore, it is not so much to be wondered at that the affair terminated so unhappily as it did. The whole subsequent proceeding, on the part of Hamor and his son, was vitiated by this error in the outset.—*¶ Longeth.* The original is a word expressive of the most intense affection, though not the same with that, v. 3, rendered 'clave unto.' But the two combined go to show the truth and ardor of Shechem's attachment to the maiden. The Hebrew is more a language of *emotion* than of *thought*, and expresses all the various kinds and degrees of *passion* with an emphasis peculiarly its own.

9, 10. *Make ye marriages with us, &c.* Their uninstructed minds could not enter into the reasons of such an exclusive policy in this respect as the Israelites felt constrained to adopt. It no doubt



11 And Shechem said unto her father, and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me, I will give.

appeared to them as a very needless, if not an absurd singularity; and in the true spirit of an unbelieving world, they endeavor to break down what they would deem the narrow spirit of caste, by holding out to them those inducements of *gainful traffic* which they are sensible they could not themselves withstand in similar circumstances, and which, alas, are usually but too potent in overcoming the scruples of the professed people of God.

11. *Let me find grace in your eyes.* That is, by having my request granted.

12. *Ask me never so much dowry and gift.* Heb. *חָרַבְתִּי עָלַי מְאֹד harbu alai meod, multiply upon me exceedingly.* It is supposed that there was a distinction between the 'dowry' and the 'gift'; that the former was the marriage-portion, which was settled upon the wife, and remained her's after her husband's death; while the 'gift' was merely a present made at the time of the betrothing, as a pledge of plighted faith. Of this nature, probably, were the jewels of silver and gold brought to Rebekah by Abraham's servant, Gen. 24. 53. 'In some previous notes we have had occasion to allude to the dower and presents required of the bridegroom on his marriage, but have referred to this place for a more detailed statement. Subject to the exceptions to which every general position is incident, we think it may be safely stated,—that among all savage and barbarous people—and therefore in the early history of every nation which afterwards became civilized—the father of a girl, in relinquishing her to a husband, conceives he has a right to receive a compensation for losing the benefit of her services, as well as for the trouble and expense of

12 Ask me never so much a dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.

Exod. 22. 16, 17. Deut. 22. 29. 1 Sam. 18. 25.

bringing up and providing for her wants. The principle is still the same, whether, as among the Bedouins, the sum exacted be called the 'price' of the woman, or is merely described as a 'gift' or 'present' to the father. The antiquity of this usage will appear from various passages in the book of Genesis; although the only instance in which a provision for the female is overlooked, is that of Jacob's engagement with Laban. The classical scholar is aware of numerous allusions to this custom. In one passage of the *Iliad* an accomplished lady is valued at four oxen. In another place, Agamemnon is made to say, that he would give one of his daughters to Achilles without exacting the least present in return. Homer never mentions any thing as given to the bride, but always the presents which the bridegroom makes to the lady's father. It is also related by Pausanias, that when Danaus found himself unable to get his daughters married, he caused it to be made known that he would not demand any presents from those who would espouse them. (See Goguet, 'Origine des Loix,' tome ii. p. 60, where these instances are adduced.) It would too much extend this note, to multiply examples from the early history of nations, and from existing practices in the world. It may suffice to state generally, that, under sundry modifications, the principle of paying the father for his daughter is distinctly recognized throughout Asia, even where the father actually receives nothing. We shall confine our instances to the Bedouins. Usages differ considerably in this and other points, among the Arabian tribes; and travellers have too hastily concluded that the customs of one tribe repre-

13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father

° deceitfully, and said, Because he had defiled Dinah their sister :

° 2 Sam. 13. 24, &c.

sented those of the entire nation. The principle of payment is indeed known to all the tribes, but its operation varies very considerably. Among some very important tribes it is considered disgraceful for the father to demand the daughter's 'price,' (*hakk el hint*), nor is it thought creditable to receive even voluntary presents; among other tribes the price is received by the parent, but is made over to the daughter, constituting her dower. Among other tribes, however, the price is rigidly exacted. The price is generally paid in cattle, and is sometimes so considerable, as to render it an advantageous circumstance when there are many daughters in a family. Five or six camels are a very ordinary payment for a person in tolerable circumstances, and, if the man can afford it, and the bride is much admired or well connected, fifty sheep and a mare or foal are added.' *Pict. Bible*.

13. *The sons of Jacob answered deceitfully, &c.* In the language of the Psalmist, Ps. 55. 21, 'The words of their mouths were smoother than butter, but war was in their hearts; their words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.' But before characterizing the conduct of his sons as it deserves, we cannot but advert to that of Jacob himself on this occasion. It was certainly lacking in the wisdom and firmness that might have been expected from him. He allowed his sons too much to take the lead in the transaction. It was very proper for the brothers to consider themselves as in a sense the guardians of their sister's honor; but not in such a way as to supersede the authority or silence the counsel of their father. The answer to the question, whether Dinah should be given in marriage to Shechem belonged to the parents, and not to the brothers.

VOL. II.

Age and infirmity may perhaps be pleaded as an apology for the patriarch's yielding so much to the headstrong passions of his sons, but the sequel shows that it was a concession which ought at all hazards to have been avoided. But how did they demean themselves? They listened to Hamor's and Shechem's proposals with much apparent coolness, and the studied quiet of their manner probably gave no intimation of the deep and deadly purposes of revenge which they inwardly cherished. Under the calm exterior which they now assumed, they were entertaining one of the most wicked and diabolical schemes that ever entered into the heart of man. Not satisfied with confining their revenge to the guilty party, they resolve to embrace the whole city within the scope of their bloody retribution, and knowing that they were too few to effect this without stratagem, they devise a plan of first *disabling* and then *slaying* them. The execution of this project was marked, (1) by the *vilest hypocrisy*. They pretended to have scruples of conscience about connecting themselves with persons who were uncircumcised. Could this difficulty be removed, they intimate that there would be no bar in the way to the projected union. Now, although there is no evidence that such a law was at this time established in Jacob's family, yet it is true that marriages with the neighboring heathen were discouraged; and if they had sincerely aimed in this way to bring them off from their idolatrous practices, and to cast in their lot with Israel, the measure would have been more excusable. But it is clear they had no such design. The interests of religion did not enter into their thoughts; and consequently their proposition was marked, (2) by the *grossest profaneness*.

14 And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised : for <sup>p</sup> that *were* a reproach unto us :

15 But in this will we consent unto you : If ye will be as we *be*, that every male of you be circumcised ;

<sup>p</sup> Josh. 5. 9.

They knew that if the Shechemites were persuaded to submit to circumcision, it would be a mere form, leaving them, as to their relation to God, just where they were before. They knew that both the prince and his people were altogether ignorant of Jehovah, and destitute of the smallest wish to be interested in the covenant made by God with Abraham ; and yet they propose that all the males should receive the seal of this holy covenant ; and that too, not in order to obtain any spiritual benefit, but solely with a view to carnal gratification ! What a profanation was this of God's sacred ordinance ! What awful impiety, in recommending to them such a method of attaining their ends ! But this is not all. The measure was conceived, (3) in the spirit of *the most savage cruelty*. That a motive of revenge should excite them to murder the person more immediately implicated in the offence, was possible enough. But that it should prompt them to involve a multitude of innocent persons in the same ruin, and that at a time when they were making the most painful sacrifices to conciliate their favor ; this almost exceeds belief. Yet such was their inhuman plot, which they too successfully carried into effect ! What amazing depravity does it argue first to form such a horrid purpose, and then to cover it with the cloak of religion ! What had *they* to do to talk of *conscience*, when they could deliberately contrive a plan for murdering a whole city ! —¶ And *said*, *Because he had defiled Dinah their*

16 Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised ; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

*sister*. We take these words as designed to render a reason for the deceitfulness which, it is said in the preceding clause, that they had recourse. 'They said,' i. e. they justified the matter *by saying to themselves* that Shechem had acted the part of a vile deceiver in betraying their sister's innocence, and having thus forfeited all right to truth and sincerity from others, it was perfectly lawful for them to retaliate upon him with equal duplicity. It was no doubt a very *natural*, but at the same time a very *sinful* logic, by which they came to this conclusion.

14. *We cannot do this thing*. 'Can not' is here used as frequently else where in the sense of *moral* and not *natural* inability. 'We cannot, for it would be contrary both to custom and canon.' Thus, Gen. 43. 32, 'Because the Egyptians *might not* eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.' This, though correct, is rather a paraphrase than a translation, for the original has it 'cannot eat ;' i. e. cannot without violating law or usage.

15—17. *In this will we consent*. 'That is, on the condition. —¶ *We will take our daughter*. They here speak as in the person of Jacob, for she was his daughter only, and not theirs. So above, v. 8, where Hamor says, 'The soul of my son longeth for *your* daughter,' the Heb. suffix for *your* is plural, as if she were the daughter of the whole company. Targ. Jon. 'We will take our daughter by violence.'

18 And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem, Hamor's son.

19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he *was* more honourable than all the house of his father.

20 ¶ And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

21 These men *are* peaceable with us, therefore let them dwell in the

¶ 2 Chron. 4. 9.

18. *Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem.* Heb. 'Were good in the eyes of;' by which is meant, not that the conditions, in themselves considered, were pleasing, but they were willing on the whole to agree to them; the advantages they promised themselves by complying were sufficient to counterbalance all objections.

19. *Deferred not to do the thing.* Deferred not *consenting* to it; for he certainly deferred actually *doing* it till he had obtained the concurrence of his countrymen.

20, 21. *Came unto the gate.* To the place of public convocation, where the citizens assembled to deliberate upon matters of general interest, corresponding to the halls, council-chambers, or town-houses, of modern times. When, therefore, our Saviour says that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church,' his meaning is, that the counsels, plots, and policies of hell, shall not prevail against it; employing a figure of speech by which the *place of counsel* stands for the *counsels themselves*.—

¶ *Communed with the men of the city, saying, &c.* The deceitful proposal succeeds with Hamor and Shechem, and they at once undertake to persuade the citizens to a compliance; not as a matter of principle, but of policy; a measure which would contribute to the public good. No little art is discoverable in

land, and trade therein: for the land, behold, *it is* large enough for them: let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.

22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they *are* circumcised.

23 *Shall* not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs *be* ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.

the arguments employed for this purpose. The principal prominence is given to those considerations which were merely secondary, while the main point, the circumcision, comes in as a little by-clause, a slight condition, to which they could not reasonably object. This was approaching worldly men through the most effectual avenue. Appeals to their interest usually succeed where their principles are addressed in vain. Yet we are not to lose sight of the overruling hand of Providence in the dire result. The licentious outrage of Shechem called for punishment, and his own and his people's readiness to profane and prostitute a sacred ordinance for the mere purpose of worldly gain, could not but provoke the displeasure of heaven. As there was no *human* authority to call them to an account for their conduct, God was pleased to visit their iniquity upon them in an extraordinary way, and while the instruments were acting from the most culpable motives, still the righteous retributions of Providence were taking effect. One wicked spirit of man was made to chastise another.

23. *Shall not their cattle, &c.—be ours.* Be more likely eventually to become ours. It does not appear that his drift was to insinuate that they could possess themselves of Jacob's riches *dishonestly*; but they doubtless appealed to merce-

24 And unto Hamor, and unto Shechem his son, hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city : and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

25 ¶ And it came to pass on the  
r ch. 23. 10.

nary motives in speaking with the Shechemites, and moreover gave them to understand that the measure was rather one of Jacob's seeking than their own. But if they thus deceived their fellow-citizens, they were soon still more sadly deceived themselves.

24. *And unto Hamor—hearkened all that went out, &c.* There is scarcely a more singular fact in all history than the ready compliance of the whole inhabitants of Shechem with the proposal here made to them. The operation in adult age is peculiarly painful, and so far as they regarded it as implying a change in their religion, the incident is equally remarkable; for we know the tenacity with which men cleave to their established modes of faith and worship—a principle distinctly recognised by the Most High himself, speaking by the mouth of his prophet, Jer. 2. 10, 11, 'For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?' In accounting for such a step on the part of the Shechemites, we may doubtless allow much to the hope of gain, and much to the reverence of their rulers; but we must go beyond this, and acknowledge a secret permitted infatuation upon their minds, in order that their connivance at a gross iniquity might be suitably punished. And punished it assuredly was, in a way to make the ears of every one that heareth of it to tingle.

25. *It came to pass on the third day, when they were sore.* Chal. 'When their pains were sorest upon them.' Thus

third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, \* Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

26 And they slew Hamor and  
• ch. 49. 5, 6, 7.

taking advantage of the disabled state of their victims, whose wounds, like all others, were most severe and painful on the third day. The whole transaction in this instance was undoubtedly conducted without Jacob's knowledge or consent. See his emphatic self-acquittal, Gen. 49, 6, with the note.—¶ *Simeon and Levi.* These were the uterine brothers of Dinah, and might naturally be expected to be most prompt in avenging her wrongs. Though these two only are mentioned, yet there is no doubt that they were assisted by a band composed of their brethren, domestics, or other associates. It is in entire accordance with the general usage of the Scriptures to speak of that being done by one or two, in which one or two are the prime movers, leaders, or overseers, though many subordinate agents are employed. In view of Levi's participation in this horrid deed, the divine clemency, in making his the priestly tribe, is strikingly displayed. We should rather have expected that some lasting stigma would have been affixed to the posterity of one who had covered his own name so deep with infamy. But we learn from it how, where sin has abounded, grace often much more abunds; and we gather also hence a fresh proof of the veracity of Moses. Himself a Levite, he does not spare the character of his progenitor. In all the simplicity of truth, he gives an unvarnished statement of atrocities which have reflected everlasting disgrace upon the memory of the founder of his line. Would an impostor have done this?

26. *With the edge of the sword.* Heb

Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city; because they had defiled their sister.

28 They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field.

29 And all their wealth, and all

their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'Ye have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against

<sup>†</sup> ch. 49. 6.    <sup>‡</sup> Josh. 7. 25.    <sup>×</sup> Exod. 5. 21. 1 Sam. 13. 4.    <sup>γ</sup> Deut. 4. 27. Ps. 105. 12.

לִפְיֵי הָרֶבֶץ *lephi hareb*, by the mouth of the sword; whence the sword is said to 'devour.'—¶ Came upon the city boldly.

Heb. בָּטָח *batah*, in confidence. This may refer either to the manner of the attack, which is favored by the Gr. ἀσφαλως *undauntedly, securely*; or to the state of the city, as understood by the Chal. 'The city which dwelt confidently.' But their fancied security was an idle dream, from which they were awakened by the terrors of a merciless massacre. The story teaches us, with affecting emphasis, how one sin leads on to another, and, like flames of fire, spreads desolation on every side! Dissipation leads to seduction; seduction produces wrath; wrath thirsts for revenge; the thirst of revenge has recourse to treachery; treachery issues in murder; and murder is followed by lawless depredation! Were we to trace the history of illicit commerce between the sexes, we should perhaps find it, more than any other, terminating in blood. We may read this warning truth, not only in the history of David and his family, but in what is constantly occurring in our times. The murder of the innocent offspring by the hand of the mother, or of the mother by the hand of the seducer, or of the seducer by the hand of a brother or of a supplanted rival, are events which too frequently fall under our notice. Nor is this all, even in the present world. Murder seldom escapes detection; a public execution,

therefore, may be expected to close the tragic scene.

29. All their wealth. Heb. הָיִיל *hayil*, a word of large import in the original comprehending every thing in which a man's strength, power, or ascendancy consists; being applied to prowess of body, Eccl. 10. 10; to an army of men, 1 Sam. 10. 26; to worldly riches, Prov. 10. 15; and to the rampart of a city, Nah. 3. 8. The Chal. renders it 'riches', and the Gr. σωμαρα *bodies*, a term equivalent to *servants*, as is clear from Rev. 18. 13—'and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves (σωματα) and souls of men.'—¶ Spoiled even all that was in the house. Took as a spoil all that was in the houses; 'house' being here a collect. sing. for the plur., just as 'little ones' is in the original in the singular (טַף) *taph*.

30. And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, &c. It is some relief to find the good old man expressing his disapprobation of these bloody proceedings. Yet it is a natural query why he manifested so little apparent concern for their sin, as *sin*, dwelling entirely upon the consequences. Why did he not reproach them, in the name of the God whom they professed to serve, with their cruelty, their perfidy, their rapacity? Why does he give way so entirely to thoughts of his own calamity, and speak as if they had destroyed him instead of the Shechemites? No doubt his real drift was, by this very mode of address, to

me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

work upon their compunctions and bring them to a proper acknowledgment of what they had done. He knew they were so hardened in wickedness that nothing but *consequences*, and such as affected their *safety* too, would make them feel. Unlike Abraham and Isaac, who had demeaned themselves peaceably wherever they had pitched their tents, and by their good conduct had not only gained the respect of the heathen, but recommended true religion, he had now, in consequence of his close connexion with such sons of Belial, rendered himself odious to the neighboring Canaanites. And what else could he anticipate, but that they should combine against them, and cut them off root and branch? This, we say, was calculated to rouse them from their guilty apathy, and when they saw that they were likely to plunge their aged father and themselves into one common perdition, to lead them to call upon God for that mercy to which they had so little claim.—¶ *Make me to stink.* This is the literal and highly expressive sense of the original, but most of the ancient versions resolve the phrase into less figurative terms. Chal. 'Ye will occasion or put enmity between me and the Canaanites.' Syr. 'Ye have offended me to bring evil between me and the inhabitants.' Arab. 'Ye have rendered me infamous, and corrupted my condition with respect to the Canaanites.' Vulg. 'Ye have made me odious to the Canaanites.' 'Of a man who has lost his honor, whose fame is entirely gone, it is said, 'Ah! he has lost his smell—where is the sweet smell of former years?' 'Alas!' says an old man, 'my smell is forever gone.' Roberts.—¶ *Troubled me.* That is, not only by grieving and disquieting my spirit, but by putting me in danger of being destroyed by those with whom I have hitherto lived in

31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

peace. Thus Achan is said to have 'troubled' Israel, and was himself 'troubled;' i. e. destroyed, Josh. 6. 18, and 7. 25. Thus, Prov. 15. 27, 'He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.' Here, 'troubling one's house' is opposed to 'living,' which makes it equivalent to 'to destroy.'—¶ *I being few in number.* Heb. אָנִי מְתֵּר מִסָּפָר, *ani methe mispar, I men of number.* Another instance of an individual being identified with his party so as to constitute a kind of plurality of denomination. The phrase 'few in number,' or 'men of number,' signifies *capable of being numbered.* It arose probably from the language of the promise made to Abraham, that he should be the father of a seed which could *not* be numbered. The opposite of this, of course, is a company which *can* be numbered, and therefore comparatively *few*.

31. *Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?* We see little in this answer to their father's reproof, but the workings of offended pride and unyielding obstinacy. They would not have felt any displeasure against Shechem had he dealt with any other female, or any number of them, as harlots; but that he should offer an indignity to *their sister*, this was the offence—an offence inexpressible by any thing less than the blood of all that were, even in the most distant way, connected with him. So much more sensibly are men prone to feel for an affront to their own honor than to that of God. Again, how shocking is the relentlessness which they evince. We might reasonably expect, that after a little reflection these bloody murderers would be filled with remorse. But all sense of guilt, yea, all regard for their own and their father's safety, seemed to be totally banished from their minds. Instead of regretting that they

## CHAP. XXXV.

AND God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to <sup>a</sup> Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar un-

<sup>a</sup> ch. 28. 19.

had acted so treacherous and cruel a part, they vindicate themselves without hesitation, and even tacitly condemn their father as manifesting less concern for his daughter than they had shown for their sister. We can scarcely conceive a more awful instance than this, of the power of sin to blind the understanding and to harden the heart. But daily experience shows that when once the conscience is seared, there is no iniquity too gross to be palliated or justified.

REMARKS. Two additional reflections are suggested by the present narrative.

(1.) *How astonishingly may the judgment of men be warped by partiality and self-love!* These men could see evil in the conduct of Shechem, and yet justify their own; though theirs was beyond all comparison more vile and horrible than his. Yet is this an uncommon spectacle? If the world behold any thing amiss in the conduct of a person professing religion, with what severity will they condemn it, even though they themselves are living in the unrestrained commission of a thousand sins! And even professors of godliness themselves are too apt to be officious in pulling out a mote from their brother's eye, while they are inattentive to the beam that is in their own eye. Let us learn rather to exercise forbearance towards the faults of others and severity towards our own.

(2.) *How certainly will there be a day of future retribution.* Here we behold a whole city of innocent men put to death, and their murderers going away unpunished. But let us not on this account arraign the dispensations of Providence. In the last day these apparent inequali-

ties will be rectified. It will then infallibly go well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. The excuses which men now make, will then be of no avail. Every transaction shall then appear in its proper colors; and every man receive according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 28. 13.    <sup>c</sup> ch. 27. 43

## CHAP. XXXV.

1. *And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, &c.* The events which had recently occurred at Shechem would no doubt render it unsafe for Jacob to remain longer in that place or its vicinity. Indeed it would scarcely have been surprising to hear of a confederacy among all the neighboring clans to exterminate such a band of robbers and murderers from the face of the earth men who would perpetrate, in a time of profound peace, an atrocity unheard of even among the cruel practices of war. Jacob was undoubtedly aware of his danger, and deeply exercised on account of it; and it pleased God in the midst of his bitter and perplexing reflections again to appear, and give him directions what to do. Of the manner in which the present communication was made to him, nothing is said: but the purport of it was that he should remove to Beth-el, situated about thirty miles south of Shechem, build there an altar, and perform the vow which he had previously made, Gen. 28. 20, 22. It was now about thirty years since that vow was made; Jacob had dwelt eight or ten in Canaan since his return from Padan-aram, and had now attained to one hundred and six years of age; yet for some reason unexplained he had hitherto delayed to pay it. Possibly he may have



2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange  
<sup>d</sup> ch. 18. 19. Josh. 24. 15. <sup>e</sup> ch. 31. 19, 34. Josh. 24. 2, 23.

gods that *are* among you, and be clean and change your garments:

<sup>f</sup> Exod. 19. 10.

been culpably remiss in this matter, and the remark of a Jewish commentator may be well founded, that God permitted the ravishment of Dinah as a punishment to Jacob for his criminal delay, just as he met Moses with alarming tokens of his displeasure, Ex. 4. 24, for having sinfully deferred the circumcision of his child. But without assuming to pronounce upon this point, we cannot but advert to the mild and affecting tone of the expostulation here addressed to Jacob—one that reminds him not so much of the neglect of the servant, as of the mercy of the master. He does not say, 'Build an altar to the God whom thou hast promised, and hast disappointed;' but unto the 'God who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.' There must have been something peculiarly touching in the recollections awakened by these words; and that their due effect was not lost upon Jacob, appears from the fact that he made immediate preparations for the accomplishment of his vow.

2. *Jacob said unto his household, &c.* No sooner is Jacob admonished to go to Bethel, than he feels the necessity of a household reformation, and orders it to be at once entered upon. His first injunction is, that the strange gods among them should be put away. This was acting faithfully and conscientiously towards the members of his numerous family; but who would have believed that such a command could have been necessary? Did he then know of the corrupt practices of his family, and had he connived at them? Was this the first time that his voice had been raised against them? We know not how to avoid the inference that this was the

case. We fear that even Jacob partook so largely of the infirmities of fallen nature, that he had failed to discharge his duty in this respect; that even though the honor of God was at stake, he had been unwilling to incur the resentment or the complaints of those that were dear to him; and had accordingly, after finding that the teraphim were in Rachel's possession, tolerated an evil which he ought promptly to have checked in its very outset. We are glad, however, to find him at length resolved to 'put them away,' though the command carries an implication of his own crime as well as that of his family.—

¶ *Strange gods.* Heb. אֱלֹהֵי הַנֶּכֶר *elohe hannekar*, gods of the stranger; i. e. gods of strange or foreign nations. Gr. 'Foreign gods.' Chal. 'Idols of peoples.' Allusion is perhaps had not only to the idolatrous images stolen from Laban, but to those also which might have been brought in among the spoils of the captured Shechemites. Accordingly the Targ. Jon. terms them 'the gods which thou didst receive from the house of the idols of Shechem.'—¶ *Be clean and change your garments.* Targ. Jon. 'Cleanse yourselves from the pollutions of the slain to whom you have come nigh.' This outward purification and change of raiment was enjoined as indicative of that internal cleansing of the soul which is always requisite to the acceptable worship of God, and which the recent defilement of his house, by the double stain of idolatry and murder, rendered still more indispensably necessary. See Ex. 19. 10, 15; Lev. 15. 18. It does not appear that this ceremony was expressly commanded to Jacob, but a certain intrinsic decorum commended it to his judgment. From a similar sense of fit-

3 And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, <sup>ε</sup> who answered me in the day of my distress, <sup>h</sup> and was with me in the way which I went.

<sup>ε</sup> ch. 32. 7, 24. Ps. 107. 6. <sup>h</sup> ch. 28. 20. & 31. 3, 42.

ness Moses directed those who had been concerned in the affair of the golden calf at Horeb to Ex. 33. 4, 5, to put off their ornaments, that their outward attire might correspond with the required humility of their spirit. With men of somewhat crude conceptions of spiritual things, such an outward change would help them to discern more clearly the offensive nature of idolatry, and though true penitence is seated in the heart, yet its external indications react upon and quicken the inward sentiment.

3. *Who answered me in the day of my distress.* Chal. 'Unto God who received my prayer in the time of my tribulation, and his word was my help in the way which I went.' God's 'answering' his people is his *efficaciously hearing* them, so as actually, by word or deed, to grant their request. Thus he is said to '*answer by fire*,' 1 Kings 18. 24, when by that token he testified his approbation of his worshippers. He '*answers*' also in the actual bestowment of blessings; Is. 41. 17, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord *will hear* them.' Heb. '*Will answer* them;' i. e. *will supply their wants*. Also by delivering them from danger; Ps. 22. 21, 'Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou *hast heard* me from the horns of the unicorn.' Heb. '*Hast answered* me.' In using these words Jacob seems to have endeavored to impress upon his household his own sentiments. What had been a mercy to him was a mercy to them, and they were bound so to consider it. By putting them in mind, moreover, of God's answering him in the day of his distress, we would

4 And they gave unto Jacob <sup>all</sup> the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* <sup>i</sup> ear-rings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under <sup>k</sup> the oak which *was* by Shechem.

<sup>i</sup> Hos. 2. 13. <sup>k</sup> Josh. 24. 26. Judg. 9. 6.

not only excite them to gratitude for the past, but kindle a hope also that Heaven would disperse the cloud that hung over them *now*, on account of the late impure and bloody transaction.

4. *Ear-rings which were in their ears.* This may be meant of the gold and silver ear-rings in the ears of the idols; but if intended of those worn in the ears of the women, they were probably taken from the idols, and so by association might themselves become a source of idolatry, or at least of superstitious reverence. They were therefore to be abolished as among the appendages of a forbidden worship. Deut. 7. 25, 'The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not desire the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God.' Hence the Jewish canon: 'It is commanded to destroy idolatry and the ministerial instruments thereof, and whatsoever is made for the same; and it is forbidden to have any use or profit by any of these things.' Considering the evils which prevailed in Jacob's family, and the bewitching nature of idolatry, it is somewhat surprising to observe the readiness with which they now complied with his commands. But undoubtedly the whole air, manner, and language of Jacob on this occasion was decided, and such as convinced his household that he was engaged in earnest in a very solemn duty, in which it would be dangerous for them not to unite. The incident teaches us that where our spirit is right, we have great access to the hearts of others. Duties difficult and hopeless in

5 And they journeyed : and <sup>1</sup> the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 15. 16. & 23. 27. & 34. 24. Deut.

they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

11. 25. Josh. 2. 9. & 5. 1. 1 Sam. 14. 15. 2 Chron. 14. 14.

prospect are rendered easy and successful the moment we have sufficient faith to attempt to carry them into execution. Where a reproof or remonstrance is offered in a truly Christian temper, and the general deportment of the speaker is in accordance with his words, men will often listen much more willingly than we anticipate. Although no instantaneous effect should be produced, yet some arrow may be fixed in the conscience which is never afterwards extracted. Some seeds may be sown in the memory which, after lying dormant for a long time, may at last 'take root downwards and bear fruit upwards,' when the sower who went forth to sow the seed has long since been called to his reward. Let us consider this, and be more studious to improve the offered opportunities of doing good.—¶ *Hide them under the oak which was by Shechem.* It was under this same oak that Joshua afterwards set up a stone of witness, upon the occasion of his having convened the people at Shechem, and, probably in memory of this very transaction of Jacob cleansed them of their idols, and brought them renewedly into a solemn covenant with God. Josh. 24. 25, 26. As the oak, among the Canaanites, was dedicated to religious purposes, Deut. 12. 2, he might have supposed that the sacredness of the depository would be likely to guard them from being discovered or disturbed. If it be asked why Jacob did not burn instead of burying them, it may be answered, that perhaps he might in the first instance have caused them to pass through the fire, but as metallic substances are not consumed, but merely transformed by the action of fire, he would still have had the *material* on his hands to be disposed of some other way ; and as dead

bodies, and every thing foul, loathsome, and abominable, was buried out of sight, he seems properly to have taken the same course with these idols and their appendages. It would seem, moreover, that the procedure afterwards enjoined under the Mosaic law, Deut. 7. 25, was now acted upon by the patriarch, and perhaps generally considered obligatory in similar circumstances ; 'The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire ; thou shalt not desire the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein : for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God.'

5. *The terror of God was upon the cities, &c.* That is, *was made to be.* The Heb. חַיָּה *hayah*, and the Gr. *eyevero*, frequently express, not the simple fact of being, but being in consequence of active causation or efficiency. Thus, Ezek. 37, 'And the hand of the Lord was upon me ;' i. e. was efficaciously *made to be* upon me. Rev. 1. 10, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ;' i. e. I was *made to be* in the Spirit, by a strong supernatural impulse. The phrase 'terror of God' is probably equivalent to *a mighty terror, an astounding dread* ; being an instance of the idiom mentioned in the note on Gen. 23. 6. Otherwise we may understand it with Ainsworth *of a terror sent of God.* Had it not been for such a supernatural panic, the neighboring clans might easily have combined, and falling upon Jacob's company, have put them all to death, by way of avenging the massacre of the Shechemites. The kind care which God evinced towards the family on this occasion would appear to have been no less contrary to the parents' fears, than to the deserts of his ungodly children, and its being extended to them *for his sake*, must have had the effect, one would

6 ¶ So Jacob came to <sup>m</sup> Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (that is Beth-el) he and all the people that were with him.

7 And he <sup>n</sup> built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because <sup>o</sup> there God appeared unto

<sup>m</sup> ch. 28. 19. 22.    <sup>n</sup> Eccles. 5. 4.  
<sup>o</sup> ch. 28. 13.

think, to abase their proud spirits, and make them feel how much they were indebted to the divine clemency.

6. *Jacob came to Luz.* 'Luz' is the Heb. term for *almond-tree*, and the place was perhaps so called from this species of tree growing abundantly in that region. See Note on Gen. 28. 19. From this it appears that *Bethel* had not yet become the common name of the place, though it was thirty years since it had been bestowed by Jacob. But he then did it as a private individual, in memory of a special manifestation made to himself. From the time of this his second sojourn there, we may suppose that the name 'Bethel' came gradually into vogue, and was at length firmly established.

7. *El-Beth-el.* That is, *The God of Bethel*. He had before called it simply *Bethel*, *house of God*; but now, with a view to impart a still greater degree of sanctity to every association connected with the place, he again affixes the common title of *God* to the name. Still we cannot but consider it as doubtful whether the present rendering affords us precisely the sense of the original. According to the distinction of the Hebrew accents, the first 'El' is separated from the rest of the word, as if the writer meant to say, 'And he connected the name of El (God) with the place, to wit, by calling it 'Beth-el' or *house of God*.' This is at once intelligible and pertinent; but what shall we understand by a title, of which the literal translation is either 'God-house-of-God,' or 'God-of-the-house-of-God? On the whole,

him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

8 But <sup>p</sup> Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el, under an oak: and the name of it was called Alon-bachuth.

<sup>p</sup> ch. 24. 59.

we have little doubt that the first 'El' does not belong to the name of the place, especially as we have no evidence that it was ever subsequently called any thing but 'Beth-el.'—¶ *Because God there appeared unto him.* Heb. נִגְלוּ אֱלֹהִים נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו *niglu elaw ha-elohim*, the *Elohim* were revealed to him. As 'Elohim' is here contrary to general usage, connected with a verb plural, it is doubtful whether it be not intended as a designation of the angels seen in Jacob's vision. So at least it is understood by the Chal., which renders it, 'Because there the angels of God appeared to him.' The Gr., however, renders it, as in the Eng. version, 'Because there God appeared to him.' Vatablus, Michaelis, and several other critics of note, agree with the Chal., though Rosenmuller doubts whether 'Elohim' by itself ever signifies *angels*.

8. *But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died.* 'Deborah;' i. e. a bee. From the respect paid to her memory, we may fairly infer that Deborah was a venerable matron of exemplary piety. If we suppose her to have been fifty years of age when she left Mesopotamia with Rebekah, she could not have been far from a hundred and eighty at this time. On what occasion she was transferred from Isaac's to Jacob's family we are not informed. She might have been sent to him on his return from Syria, after leaving Laban, when to his young and growing family her services would have been peculiarly acceptable.—¶ *And she was buried, &c.* The death of an aged servant, when her work was

9 ¶ And <sup>a</sup> God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Padan-aram; and blessed him.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: <sup>r</sup> thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, <sup>s</sup> but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel.

11 And God said unto him, <sup>t</sup> I am

<sup>a</sup> Hos. 12. 4. <sup>r</sup> ch. 17. 5. <sup>s</sup> ch. 32. 28.  
<sup>t</sup> ch. 17. 1. 48. 3, 4. Exod. 6. 3.

done, would not ordinarily excite much regret. To have afforded her a decent burial was all that in most cases would be thought of. But Jacob's family were so much affected by the event, as not only to weep over her grave, but to call the very tree under the shadow of which she was interred, 'Allon-bachuth,' *the oak of weeping*. It is the more singular, too, that the family that wept over her was not that in which she had spent what we should call her best days; but one that had merely taken her under their care in her old age. We may suppose, however, that the sorrow expressed on this occasion was prompted not only by the recollection of her character, but also of her office, as having been 'Rebekah's nurse.' The text seems to lay an emphasis on these words. We are told, ch. 29. 10, that the sight of the daughter of Laban, 'his mother's brother,' and even of his sheep, had interested Jacob's heart; much more would the burial of his nurse. In weeping over her grave he would seem to be weeping over that of his beloved parent, and paying that tribute of affection to her memory, which Providence had denied him at the time of her decease.

9. *And God appeared unto Jacob again, &c.* We are not probably to understand from this that the divine manifestation here spoken of occurred at the time of his return from Padan-aram, or immediately after it; but he has reference to the present time, and it is so spoken of in order to distinguish it from

God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply: <sup>u</sup> a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

12 And the land <sup>w</sup> which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

<sup>u</sup> ch. 17. 5, 6, 16. & 28. 3. & 48. 4.

<sup>w</sup> ch. 12. 7. & 13. 15. & 26. 3, 4. & 28. 13.

the former appearance of God to him at the same place, recorded Gen. 28. He appeared to him at Bethel when he was going to Padan-aram, and now he appeared to him again on the same spot when he was come *out of* Padan-aram. He had indeed, in the interval, testified in various ways his ever-present aid to his servant, and fulfilled his promise of being with him wherever he went, but up to this time he had not so clearly and so signally manifested himself as on this occasion.—¶ *And blessed him.* Confirmed afresh all his previous promises of blessing.

10—12. *God said unto him, Thy name, &c.* The whole account contained in these verses, of the appearance of God to Jacob, and of his consequent conduct, describes nothing more than a solemn and mutual renewal of the covenant already established. There is nothing material now said or done, but what had been said or done before. (1.) God had before said, Gen. 32. 28, that his name should no more be called Jacob, but Israel, i. e. that he should *mainly* be called Israel. This honor is here *renewed*. (2.) God had before declared that the promises made to Abraham should be fulfilled in his posterity. This declaration is here *renewed*, and prefaced with an assertion of his own all-sufficiency to fulfil them. (3.) When God had before appeared to him, he set up a pillar of stone, and poured oil upon it, and called the name of the place Bethel, Gen. 28. 13, 14. This ceremony he now *renewed*, with the addition of a

13 And God <sup>z</sup> went up from him, in the place where he talked with him.

14 And Jacob <sup>v</sup> set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, *even* a pillar of stone : and he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

<sup>z</sup> ch. 17. 22.

<sup>v</sup> ch. 28. 18.

drink-offering, for which in his first journey he probably had not the materials. These incidents may teach us that the most precious favors of heaven often come to us, not in the form of blessings or promises entirely new, but in the repetition or revival of those which we have already experienced in times past. And so, on the other hand, it may be that the most acceptable manner in which they can serve God will be, not by engaging in something unattempted before, but by 'doing our first works,' by reminding ourselves of our covenant vows, and seeking anew that spiritual communion which is the life of our souls.—¶ *A nation and a company of nations.* Or, Heb. 'A nation, *even* a church of nations.' Gr. 'Nations and synagogues of nations.' Chal. 'People and a congregation of tribes shall be of thee, and kings reigning over peoples.'—¶ *To thee and to thy seed*; i. e. to thee, *even* to thy seed. The patriarchs are thus frequently identified with their posterity. See Gen. 13. 15. The key to the interpretation of this promise is furnished us by such passages as the following, Josh. 5. 9,—'the land which the Lord swore unto their fathers that he would give us.'

13. *And God went up from him, &c.* This implies a visible manifestation in the symbol of his presence. Chal. 'The glory of the Lord went up.' Arab. and Ethiop. 'The light or splendor of God went up.' See the explanation in the Note on Gen. 17. 22.

14. *And Jacob set up a pillar, &c.* If the pillar which he had formerly erect-

15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, <sup>z</sup> Beth-el.

16 ¶ And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath : and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.

<sup>z</sup> ch. 28. 19.

ed were now standing, the setting up a new one would seem to have been unnecessary, as the remaining rites could have been easily performed upon that. The probability is, that as several years had elapsed, the first erection had gone wholly to decay, or become so much dilapidated as to require to be set up anew; and this we suppose Jacob now to have done. He then poured upon it a libation of wine and oil, and bestowed again the name of Bethel as a memorial of his faith and gratitude, and with a design to have the appellation perpetuated to the latest generations.

16. *And they journeyed.* The Gr. here inserts in addition the final clause of v. 21, rendering it, 'And Jacob journeyed from Bethel, and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Edar,' The reason of this will shortly be explained.—

¶ *But a little way.* Heb. כְּבֵרֶת הָאָרֶץ *kivra-th haaretz*, a little space of ground. The same word in the original, Gen. 48. 7, is rendered in the Gr. 'Hippodrome,' or the length of a horse-race course, which, Michaelis says, among the people of the East was about a mile. This agrees very nearly with what travellers have reported of the distance of Rachel's tomb from Bethlehem.—¶ *Ephrath*; i. e. *fruitful*; called also here 'Ephrata.' See below, on v. 19.—¶ *And Rachel travailed, &c.* Jacob's sojourn at Bethel was no doubt one of the peculiarly bright spots in his history. The memory of former merciful visitations was here graciously revived to him; his family and household were brought in apparent sincerity to the worship of the

17 And it came to pass when she was in hard labour that the midwife

said unto her, Fear not ; \* thou shalt have this son also.

a ch. 30. 24. 1 Sam. 4. 20.

true God ; and, in addition to this, the comforts of worldly prosperity were mingled in his cup. But an event soon occurred, which taught him how closely connected, in this vale of tears, are our sorrows and our joys. Bethel beheld him at the summit of worldly happiness. Bethlehem, the next town through which he passes, sees him in the depths of affliction, mourning the untimely death of his beloved Rachel. The history does not expand itself here, but simply relates the fact that she died in giving birth to a son ; and the incident recalls, with painful vividness, the passionate exclamation she had before uttered, 'Give me children, or else I die.' Her prayer was heard, but at the expense of her life ! Alas ! how often should we be ruined at our own request, if God were not more merciful to us than we are to ourselves !

17. *And it came to pass, &c.* The words now uttered by the midwife seem to have had allusion to what was said by Rachel herself on a former occasion. At the birth of her first son, Gen. 30. 24, she called him Joseph, a name which has the import of *adding*, 'for she said, the Lord shall *add* to me another son.' Her words, if now reported to Jacob, with the recollection of the above prophetic hint, would work tenderly upon his feelings, and render his loss more affecting. But they appear to have had no influence on Rachel. Life was ebbing too rapidly to permit her to rejoice even in the acquisition she had so long and so ardently desired. Neither the recollections nor the prospects of worldly blessings avail much to gladden the chamber of sickness and of death. Rachel has the sentence of death in herself, and makes no answer ; but, turning her dying eyes towards the child, and calling him 'Ben-oni,' *son of*

*my sorrow*, she expires ! The circumstances were very similar to those of the death of Phineas' wife, 1 Sam. 4. 20, 21, 'And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not ; for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel.'—'His father called him Benjamin. Heb. בִּנְיָמִין *binyamin, son of the right hand* ; implying that he should be peculiarly *near and dear* to his father, as is evident from the Scriptural usage of the phrase 'right hand.' Thus it is the especial prerogative of the Saviour that he should '*sit at the right hand of God*,' Ps. 110. 1 ; parallel to which it is said, Ps. 80. 17, 'Let thy hand be upon the man *of thy right hand*, upon the *son of man* whom thou madest strong for thyself.' So when we are commanded to cut off the offending *right hand*, it is the same as requiring us to resign whatever is most dear and precious to us, if it be inconsistent with our higher interests. The former name, though very appropriate at the time, yet, if continued, would tend perpetually to revive the recollection of his beloved wife ; and of such a monitor he did not stand in need. The grief of a good man under the loss of earthly comforts may be very deep and unfeigned, yet it is unbecoming such a man to pore over his afflictions with cherished melancholy. We should aim rather to surround ourselves with the mementos of our *mercies* than of our *afflictions*, and to divert our thoughts from the objects taken away, and direct them to those that are left. Above all, let us guard against setting our hearts unduly on any treasure upon the earth, lest what we reckon as *adding* to our joys should be made a source of suffering and sorrow

18 And it came to pass as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.

19 And <sup>b</sup> Rachel died, and was

<sup>b</sup> ch. 48. 7.

18. *As her soul was in departing.* Heb. *בִּצְתָה נַפְשָׁהּ* *betzeth naphshah*, in the going out of her soul, or life. Gr. *ἐν τῷ ἀπέρχεται αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς*, in her sending out her life. The language legitimately implies no more than the departing or ceasing of the vital principle, whatever that be. In like manner, when the prophet Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child, 1 Kings 17. 21, and cried three times, saying, 'O Lord my God, let this child's soul come unto him again,' he merely prays for the return of his physical vitality. See Note on Gen. 9. 4.

19. *Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.* Ephrath, or Ephrata, was the old, and Bethlehem the later name of this town. 'Bethlehem' means 'house of bread;' but we do not know on what occasion it was imposed. The town was in the allotment of the tribe of Judah, being situated about six miles south of Jerusalem, on the road to Hebron. It was a city in the time of Boaz, Ruth 3. 11. 4. 1, whose grandson was Jesse, the father of David, who was born and reared there; in consequence of which the place is very frequently distinguished as 'the city of David.' It was one of the cities fortified by Rehoboam. But its greatest and most holy distinction results from its having been the appointed birth-place of our Saviour. The town is called sometimes in the Old Testament 'Bethlehem-Judah,' to distinguish it from another Bethlehem, mentioned, in Josh. 19. 15, as a city of Zebulun. Its ancient name is nearly preserved to this day, it being now called *Beit-Lahm*. The modern Bethlehem is a village covering the ridge of a hill on the southern side of a deep and ex-

tensive valley, and containing about three hundred inhabitants, the greater part of whom gain their livelihood by making beads, carving mother-of-pearl shells with sacred subjects, and manufacturing small tables and crucifixes, all of which are eagerly purchased by the pilgrims who annually resort thither. Jerome, one of the Christian fathers, passed a great part of his life in this place; and in the grotto shown as his oratory, he is said to have translated that version of the Bible which has been adopted by the church of Rome, and is called the Vulgate. He died at the advanced age of ninety-one, A. D. 422.

20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave <sup>d</sup> unto this day.

<sup>c</sup> Ruth. 1. 2. & 4. 11. Micah 5. 2. Matt. 2. 6. <sup>d</sup> 1 Sam. 10. 2. 2 Sam. 18. 18.

20. *The pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.* That is, to the time when Moses wrote this history; nearly three hundred years after the event; and that it remained for a long time after this, even to the days of Saul, we have indubitable proof from the sacred narrative, 1 Sam. 10. 2, 'And when thou art departed from me to-day, then shalt thou find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.' It is by no means improbable that the very spot is still correctly designated at the present day, although the monument now visible is confessedly a Turkish structure. 'The Turks have generally enclosed the real or supposed sepulchres of the chief characters of the Old Testament in some building or other: that which covers the tomb of Rachel is of a very humble description. It is a small square building surmounted by a dome, and resembling the common tombs of sheikhs and saints in Arabia and Egypt. Mr. Buckingham, who has particularly described



21 ¶ And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond \* the tower of Edar.

\* Mic. 4. 8.

it, says, 'We entered it on the south side by an aperture through which it was difficult to crawl, as it has no doorway; and found on the inside a square mass of masonry in the centre, built up from the floor nearly to the roof, and of such a size as to leave barely a narrow passage for walking round it. It is plastered with white stucco on the outer surface; and is sufficiently large and high to inclose within it any ancient pillar that might have been found on the grave of Rachel.' As this interior central mass is certainly different from any thing we have ourselves ever witnessed in such structures, we are disposed to concur with Mr. Buckingham in thinking it probable that it was originally intended to inclose a pillar, or fragment of one, which tradition had pointed out as the pillar of Rachel's grave; and that the present structure was afterwards built over the whole by the Mohammedans, who do not yield to the Jews or Christians in their veneration for such places. The precincts of the sepulchre are now used by the Turks as a cemetery. The desire which these people feel that their ashes may rest in this spot is described by Mr. Carne ('Recollections of the East,' p. 160.) as 'singular and extreme.' He adds, 'All round this simple tomb lie thickly strewn the graves of the Mussulmans. No slender pillars of wood or stone, with inscriptions in letters of gold, are here; not a single memorial which this people are otherwise so fond of erecting in their cemeteries. It seems to be sufficient that they are placed beneath the favorite sod: the small and numerous mounds, over which the survivor sometimes comes and weeps, mark the places of their graves.' *Pict. Bible.*

22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reu-

21. *Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.* Heb. מגדל עדר *migdal eder, tower of the flock*; as the same phrase is rendered, Mic. 4. 8, 'And thou, *O tower of the flock*, (Heb. 'Migdal Eder,') the strong hold of the daughter of Zion.' It is supposed that towers were made for the use of the shepherds in watching their flocks by night; and Jerome, who had collected a great many ancient traditions on the spot, affirms that it was at this place, near Bethlehem, that the shepherds were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night, when the angels announced the birth of the Messiah. And it is well worth of note that the Targ. Jon. paraphrases the words of Moses thus; 'And Israel went forward and pitched his tabernacle beyond Migdal Eder, the place whence the Messiah is to be revealed in the end of days.' Others, however, from the passage of Micah above cited, in which it is identified with 'the strong hold of Zion,' consider it as a denomination of Jerusalem itself, whither the tribes of Israel were wont to repair three times in a year as a flock to their fold, or to the tower of their shepherd; or, with Lightfoot, of some place in the immediate vicinity. The Sept. version, as already remarked, has inverted the order of the history, and made the encampment of Jacob beyond the tower of Edar to be *previous* to his arrival at Ephrata. This may have been because the translators considered Jerusalem, or some place in its near neighborhood, to have been the site of the tower, in which case it was necessary that one travelling from Bethel to Bethlehem should pass the tower on his way. We are of opinion, on the whole, that they are correct in their topography, though their license of trans-

ben went and <sup>f</sup> lay with Bilhah his father's concubine : and Israel

<sup>f</sup> ch. 49. 4. 1 Chron. 5. 1. 2 Sam. 16. 22.

heard *it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve :

& 20. 3. 1 Cor. 5. 1.

position is scarcely pardonable. We would accordingly render the verse thus ; ' For Israel *had* journeyed, and *had* spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder ;' i. e. supposing the starting point to have been Bethel, and the direction southward. This makes the scope of the writer to be, to state how it happened that Jacob was at Ephrata when Rachel died. After leaving Bethel, he gradually advanced in a southern direction, fixing himself at intervals at different points as the prospect of pasturage invited, and as his company increased he continued to 'spread his tent ;' i. e. to cover more and more ground, till at length, by extension and advancement, he had passed beyond Jerusalem and the 'tower of Eder' which lay in his route, and was in the immediate vicinity of Bethlehem Ephrata when Rachel died.

22. *And it came to pass, &c.* The pious patriarch, in removing from one scene of sorrow, finds himself suddenly in another. A more heart-rending event than even the death of his favorite wife is here related,—one at the recital of which we are ready to pronounce Rachel blessed in having been laid in the grave previous to its occurrence. Reuben, his eldest son, 'the beginning of his strength, and the excellency of his dignity,' he who enjoyed the highest prerogatives among his brethren, degrades and dishonors himself by the commission of a crime of the deepest die, 'such as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.' Had such a wrong been done to the aged patriarch by a stranger and a foreigner, a person of another stock, we can easily paint to ourselves and justify, the mingled emotions of grief and indignation which the act must have excited in his bosom. But

what is this compared to the anguish of recognising the guilty perpetrator in one of his own household, in his own, his eldest son ! It is as unnecessary, however, as it is painful, to dwell on this overwhelming blow to the domestic peace of Jacob. It was done in secret ; but 'Israel heard of it ;' and not only so, but God so ordered it that this flagrant deed of sin should be heard of, not by Jacob only, but by all that read the sacred story to the end of time. If tempted, therefore, to sin with the hope of concealment, let us be warned by this example, remembering that 'there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known.' In the Heb. there is an abrupt breaking off in the midst of the verse, with a long empty space between this and the final clause, together with an extraordinary mark [e] in the word 'heard' to prompt attention. Grief is sometimes most emphatically expressed by silence, and this perhaps may be intended to be intimated by certain significant signs inserted into the sacred text. It does not appear that any notice in the way of punishment was taken of Reuben's conduct at this time, but we afterwards learn, Gen. 49. 4, that he lost the birthright in consequence of it. Judgment never fails in the end to wait upon transgression. By his conduct, however, in reference to his brother Joseph, Gen. 37. 20, 22, he seems to have obtained, in behalf of his posterity at least, a mitigation of his punishment ; for Moses, in blessing the tribes, said of him. 'Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few.' Yet even here he does but *live*. No idea is suggested that he should ever *excel*, and with this the history of his tribe, in after-ages, perfectly accords.

23 The sons of Leah; <sup>ε</sup> Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun:

24 The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin:

25 And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali:

26 And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher. These *are* the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram.

<sup>ε</sup> ch. 46. 8. Exod. 1. 2.

23—26. As the history henceforward is occupied chiefly with the 'sons of Jacob,' as the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, the writer here, at the outset, briefly recapitulates their names, which are grouped together, not in the order of their birth, but according to their maternal parentage. It may perhaps appear strange that they should all be said to have been born in Padan-aram, when it is clear from this chapter that Benjamin was born in Canaan. But according to a common usage of the sacred writers, that is sometimes affirmed of a company or number taken collectively, which, though it holds good of the major part, cannot be predicated of each individual, considered separately. Thus, when our Saviour said to his disciples, Mat. 19. 28, 'Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' it is manifest that Judas, one of the twelve, is to be excepted. So, John 20. 24, Thomas is called one of *the twelve*, though in reality, as Judas was now dead, there were but eleven, and Mark accordingly mentions the latter number, Mark 16. 14, 'Afterward he appeared unto *the eleven* as they sat at meat.' In like manner Paul, Heb. 11. 1—13, having recited a list of the ancient worthies, says v. 13, 'these *all died* in faith,' whereas it is expressly asserted, v. 5, that one of them, Enoch, did not die, but was translated.

27 ¶ And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto <sup>h</sup> Mamre, unto the <sup>i</sup> city of Arbah (which is Hebron) where Abraham and Isaac sojourn-ed.

28 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years.

29 And Isaac gave up the ghost and died, and <sup>k</sup> was gathered unto his people, *being* old and full of days: and <sup>l</sup> his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 13. 18. 23. 2, 19. <sup>i</sup> Jo-h. 14. 15. 15. 13. <sup>k</sup> ch. 15. 15. 25. 8. <sup>l</sup> ch. 25. 9. 49. 31.

27—29. Before the sacred writer proceeds with the history of Jacob's twelve sons, particularly as involved in that of Joseph, he pauses a little upon two other subjects, that the thread of the story may not afterwards be broken. One of these is the conclusion of Isaac's life at the age of 180; and the other, contained in the thirty-sixth chapter, a brief sketch of the family and the temporal prosperity of Esau. Had the death of Isaac been introduced in the proper order of time, it would have fallen in the midst of the history of Joseph; but it occurred about twelve or fifteen years after his being sold into Egypt. Esau and Jacob were 120 years of age at the death of their father, and from their uniting, as Isaac and Ishmael had done on a similar occasion, in performing the funeral obsequies of their father, it is to be inferred that the reconciliation between them was cordial and lasting. The event itself occurred A. M. 2233, and after the flood 632 years.

#### CHAP. XXXVI.

The present chapter is occupied with a somewhat detailed account of the posterity of Esau, called from him *Edomites*, inserted mainly for the purpose of showing the accomplishment of the promises made to Isaac respecting him, Gen. 27. 39, 40. The promise of temporal prosperity was made to Esau when

## CHAP. XXXVI.

**N**OW these *are* the generations of Esau, <sup>a</sup> who is Edom.

2 <sup>b</sup> Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah, the

<sup>a</sup> ch. 25. 30.    <sup>b</sup> ch. 26. 34.

the spiritual blessings were secured to Jacob; and it is remarkable that on the score of worldly distinction he flourished in his lifetime, and for several generations, far beyond his brother. While the latter was a servant in Padan-aram, he established his dominion in Mount Seir; and while the descendants of the one were groaning under Egyptian bondage, those of the other were formed into an independent kingdom, and had eight kings in succession 'before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.' But the notice here taken of Esau is like an honorable inscription on his tombstone. It is a kind of final leave taken of him and of his posterity, for we hear no more of them but as enemies of the chosen people. He is presented to our view for a moment, as surrounded with a glare of earthly glory, but as there is nothing stable without the pale of the kingdom of God, the curtain speedily drops upon all his splendor and pomp, and it is seen no more. The spirit of inspiration pausing for a moment to show that no word of God, however slight, fails of its effect, immediately passes to its main drift, and directs our view to the more abiding and truly glorious concerns of the line of Jacob.

1. *These are the generations of Esau.* Heb. *הַלְדוֹתָיו* *toledoth, births*; i. e. occurrences, memorable events, matters of record. See this sense of the original confirmed in the Note on Gen. 2. 4. — ¶ *Who is Edom.* It is worthy of notice that in four different places in this chapter Esau is expressly and emphatically identified with Edom. This latter name, as we have seen, Gen. 25. 24—34, was given him with a latent reference to his sanguinary disposition,

daughter of Elon the Hittite, and <sup>c</sup> Aholibamah the daughter of Anan the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

3 And <sup>d</sup> Bashemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

<sup>c</sup> ver. 25.    <sup>d</sup> ch. 28. 9.

and as this was notoriously the character of the Edomites, especially towards Israel, it would seem as if the Holy Spirit of set purpose dwelt upon that appellation in order that its significancy might make a deep impression upon the reader.

2. *Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan.* Not the daughters, i. e. the descendants of the country called Canaan, but of the *person* of that name, the head and founder of the Canaanitish race. Gr. *απο των θυγατερων των Χαναανιων, of the daughters of the Canaanites.*

—¶ *Adah, the daughter of Elon, &c.* It is to be observed that Moses here gives the three wives of Esau different names, when he comes to speak of the posterity he had by them. We might infer from this that he had more than three; especially as the fathers of the two former are called also by other names; as for instance his first wife Judith, the daughter of Beer the Hivite, is here called Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; the second, viz. Bashemath, the daughter of Elon, is again called Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hittite; the last called, ch. 28. 9, Mahalath, is here called Bashemath. But the true solution is no doubt to be found in the fact that the two last are names of the same person, as in both places she is called the daughter of Ishmael, and the sister of Nebajoth; the same therefore may be supposed of the other two. They were probably sometimes called by the one they had in Idumea and Arabia, as Michaelis conjectures, and sometimes by the other which was given to them in Palestine. It was no uncommon thing for women in those days to be distin-

4 And \* Adah bare to Esau, Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel;

5 And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these *are* the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan.

6 And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all

\* 1 Chron. 1. 35.

guished by a plurality of names. Thus Sarah was called also Iscah; and Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, 1 Kings 15. 2, is called elsewhere, 2 Chron. 13. 2, Michajah, the daughter of Uriel. Compare Gen. 26. 34, with this passage.

4. *Adah bare to Esau, Eliphaz.* As this Eliphaz had a son named Teman, v. 11, 'Eliphaz, the Temanite,' mentioned in Job, may have been a grandson or some other descendant of this son of \*Adah.

6. *And Esau took his wives, &c.* Rather, 'had taken,' i. e. previous to Jacob's coming.—¶ *All the persons, &c.* Heb. נַפְשֹׁתַי *naphshoth, souls.* Gr. *σώματα, bodies.* Upon this peculiar usage of the Hebrew we have had occasion to remark before. See Note on Gen. 34. 29. In like manner Rom. 13. 1, 'Let every *soul* be subject to the powers that be;' i. e. let every *person*. The same phraseology, it appears, still prevails in the East. 'Has a man gone to a distant place, it is said, 'Viravan, and all the *souls* of his house, have gone to the far country.' 'Have you heard that the old man and thirty *souls* have gone on a pilgrimage?' 'Sir, I can never get rich, because I have fifteen *souls* who daily look to me for their rice.' *Roberts.*—¶ *And went.* Rather, 'had gone.'—¶ *Into the country.* Or more properly, in an indefinite sense, 'into a land or country.' Chal. 'To another land;' as if the design were to intimate that he had no *fixed destination* in leaving his native land. He went forth to seek such a residence as might appear to him most eligible, and pitched upon

the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob,

7 'For their riches were more than that they might dwell together' ch. 13. 6, 11.

Mount Seir, because that region promised to answer his expectations. The Gr. renders it, 'And Esau journeyed *from the land of Canaan.*'—¶ *From the face of.* Or, Heb. מִפְּנֵי *mippene, from before;* i. e. before his arrival; the providence of God so ordering it, that as Jacob gradually advanced to take possession of his promised inheritance, Esau should gradually withdraw to make room before him. It is not necessary to suppose that they actually made the experiment of living together before they separated and entered upon their appropriate provinces. God foresaw, and thus enabled Moses to state, what *would have been* the result, and therefore so overruled events as to preclude an experiment being made. Neither is it necessary to suppose that Esau retired from Canaan and took possession of Mount Seir with the least *design* of making room for his brother, and thus giving scope for the fulfilment of the divine promises and predictions. But God overrules by a secret influence the movements of men, so that they are made blindly to accomplish his purposes, even while intent upon seeking their own private ends. Let us learn, therefore, to discern with the eye of faith the occult workings of a wise and a kind providence in the midst of the evil counsels of wicked men, and in those events which to human view appear to be purely fortuitous.

7. *For their riches were more than that they might dwell together.* The same thing, as we have before seen, Gen. 13. 6, 'I, had happened to Abraham and

er: and <sup>e</sup> the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them, because of their cattle.

8 Thus dwelt Esau in <sup>h</sup> mount Seir: <sup>i</sup> Esau is Edom.

9 ¶ And these *are* the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites, in mount Seir:

10 These *are* the names of Esau's sons; <sup>k</sup> Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau; Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau.

11 And the sons of Eliphaz were, Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz.

12 And Timna was concubine to

<sup>g</sup> ch. 17. 8. <sup>28</sup>. 4. <sup>h</sup> ch. 32. 3. Deut. 2. 5. Josh. 24. 4. <sup>i</sup> ver. 1. <sup>k</sup> 1 Chron. 1. 35, &c.

Lot. Yet who would have thought that the fulfilment of Esau's blessing, by his increase in worldly wealth, would be one of the means by which the promise to Jacob was accomplished, that he should have the land of Canaan for his own. Does not this result teach us that the prosperity of our neighbors, so far from being a detriment to ourselves, is one of the ordinary means by which God contrives to promote our manifold advantages?—¶ *The land wherein they were strangers.* Heb. אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם *eretẓ megurehem, the land of their sojournings.*

8. Thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir. Or, more properly, 'in the mount, or mountains, of Seir;' 'Seir' being the name of a man, one of the race of the Horites, from whom the whole mountainous region was called. It was the purpose of God from the beginning that this region should revert to Esau for a possession. Josh. 24. 4, 'And I give unto Esau *mount Seir* to possess it.' Deut. 2. 5, 'Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth; because I have given *mount Seir* unto Esau for a possession.' For an extended geographical account of Mount Seir, see Pictorial Bible in loc.

Eliphaz, Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz, <sup>l</sup> Ainalek: these *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

13 And these *are* the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath, Esau's wife.

14 ¶ And these were the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau, Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah.

15 ¶ These *were* dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz, the first-born *son* of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz,

<sup>l</sup> Exod. 17. 8, 14. Numb. 24. 20. 1 Sam. 15. 2, 3, &c.

—¶ *Esau is Edom*; i. e. Esau is the same man who is elsewhere called Edom; or taking the names collectively, it may be paraphrased, 'Edomites is but another name for Esauites.' Targ. Jon. 'And he (Esau) is the prince of the Idumeans.'

9. *Esau the father of the Edomites.* Heb. אָבִי אֶדוֹם *abi elom, the father of Edom*; but nothing is more common with the sacred writers than to denominate a tribe or nation from its founder. The classical names for Edom and Edomites are Idumea and Idumeans.

15. *These were the dukes of the sons of Esau.* That is, governors, chieftains, princes; an order of rulers inferior to kings, and such as are at present denominated in the East *emirs*. The English word 'duke' must not here be taken as implying any thing like the order of nobility with which in modern times we usually associate it, but rather in the sense of the Latin *dux, leader*, from which *duke* is derived. The original אֶלְפָּה *alluph*, from the same root with אֶלֶף *aleph* the first or *leading* letter of the Heb. alphabet, properly signifies a *chief leader, conductor, guide*; as also occasionally *chiliarch, or captain of a thousand*, no doubt from the use of אֶלֶף

16 Duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek: these *are* the dukes that came of Eliphaz, in the land of Edom: these *were* the sons of Adah.

17 ¶ And these *are* the sons of Reuel, Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these *are* the dukes that came of Reuel, in the land of Edom: these *are* the sons of Bashemath, Esau's wife.

18 ¶ And these *are* the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah: these *were* the dukes that came of of Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.

19 These *are* the sons of Esau (who *is* Edom) and these *are* their dukes.

20 ¶ "These *are* the sons of Seir" the Horite, who inhabited the land; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah,

21 And Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these *are* the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom.

22 And the children of Lotan were Hori, and Heman: and Lotan's sister was Timna.

23 And the children of Shobal *were* these; Alvan, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

¶ 1 Chron. 1. 38.    " ch. 14. 6. Deut. 2. 12, 22.

*aleph* as a numeral for a thousand. The Chal. renders it 'Rabba,' a master; the Gr. *ἡγεμων*, *hegemon*, a governor or president. Still it would seem from the usage of the Hebrew that there is a sense additional to that of *ruling* involved in the term אֱלֶפֶת *alluph*. The verbal root אָלַף *alaph* has the import of *teaching*, and also of being *closely connected, associated, familiarly intimate*, and legitimately implies rather the relation of a master to his disciples, or of a friendly leader to his devoted followers, than that of a ruler to his subjects; intimating that the government was mild and patriarchal rather than despotic. Schultens remarks that nothing is more frequent in Arabic than to designate a master, chieftain, lord, prefect, or even king, by a term signifying *associate* or *companion*. Thus it is a common idiom to speak of the master of a flock as a *companion* of the flock, the governor of a city as the *companion* of the city, and the ruler of a district as the *companion* of a district; a mode of speech which he thinks is founded upon the close relation conceived to exist between rulers and subjects. With these hints before us we are prepared better to enter the

spirit of the following passages where the same word occurs. Ps. 55. 12, 13, 'It was not an enemy that reproached me, &c., but it was thou, a man mine equal, *my guide* (אֱלֶפֶת *alluphi*), and mine acquaintance.' Prov. 2. 16, 17, 'To deliver thee from the strange woman, &c., which forsaketh the *guide* (אֱלֶפֶת *alluph*) of her youth.' Prov. 16. 28, 'A whisperer separateth *chief friends* (אֱלֶפֶת)' i. e. he will, if listened to, separate parents from their children, husbands from their wives, and subjects from their rulers. The same phrase in the original occurs Prov. 17. 9, though rendered 'very friends,' where Diodati's Italian version gives 'conductor,' which he explains in a note by 'a most trusty friend, who is one's usual counselor in any difficulty and perplexity,' referring to Mic. 5. 7, 'Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a *guide* (אֱלֶפֶת *alluph*).' On the whole, therefore, we gather from the word the sense of *precedency* or *ruling*, but at the same time so connected with that of *fellowship* and *mutual confidence* as to divest it of every offensive idea of rigid and arbitrary lordship, which is still odious in the East.

24 And these *are* the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah: this *was* that Anah that found ° the mules

° Lev. 19. 19.

24. *Anah that found the mules in the wilderness.* Heb. יַמִּים *yemim*, occurring only here. This is one of the pre-eminently doubtful passages of holy writ. Jerome says that in his time there were as many opinions concerning it, as commentators, and the variety of versions to which it has given rise, would seem to confirm the remark. The Gr. leaves the word untranslated, in the form of *ιαμεν ιαμεν*, as not knowing what to render it. The Chal. translates by גִּבְרָיָא *gibbaraya*, *giants*, as if confounding the original with 'Emim,' one of the Heb. terms for *giants*. The Sam. has 'Emim,' understanding it of a warlike people bordering upon the Horites. The Syr. has 'maye,' *waters*, and in like manner the Vulg. from the fancied affinity which יַמִּים *yemim* bears to יָם *yam*, *the sea*, and מַיִם *mayim*, *waters*, translates it 'aquas calidas,' *hot or tepid waters*; as if Anah had discovered, in the parched and barren wilderness, several springs of that description. Amidst these discordant opinions we shall not assume the province of deciding, but state the evidence of the two most probable, leaving it to the reader to adopt that which seems to him to carry the most weight with it. (1.) The most accredited rendering among the Jews is that of *mules*, which is adopted also by our English version. By those that hold to this opinion it is contended that the real object of Anah's discovery was the method of breeding *mules*, from the hitherto unknown conjunction of the horse and the ass. The fact is now well known, that mules are the mongrel product of a cross-breed propagation, and consequently were not created among the animal tribes with which the Most High originally stocked the earth; for to all the creatures which he at first

in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father.

brought into being, he gave the capacity and the command to *increase and multiply*, Gen. 1. 22, 28, and this increase was to be made in each of the different species, *according to its kind*, Gen. 1. 24. But as mules are not possessed of this property of *sui generis* propagation, the inference is necessarily drawn that they were not originally created; and Anah, therefore, by some accidental circumstance, or perhaps under the prompting of some impure and licentious motives, might have been the first who discovered this unnatural mode of engendering between animals of different races. Accordingly some have supposed that his conduct in the affair was criminal, and that Moses intended to censure his misguided and preposterous ingenuity, in that, instead of being satisfied with the numerous flocks and herds bestowed by the bounty of Providence on his family, he contrived to originate a new and spurious breed of animals, unknown to nature, and contrary to the laws of her operations. But, on the other hand, it must be confessed that Bochart, in his *Hierozoicon*, reasons very forcibly against this interpretation. His objections are that מֵצָא *matzu*, *found*, never signifies to *invent*, but rather to *meet with*, to *happen on*, or to *encounter*—that mules are never called יַמִּים *yemim* in the Scriptures, but פֶּרֶדִּים *peredim*—that Anah fed *asses* only, and not *horses*—and that there is no mention made of *mules* in Palestine till the days of David. From the whole he concludes that a formidable people called *Emim* are meant, with whom Anah *fought*; and he quotes in confirmation a number of passages in the sacred writers where the same form of expression, *he* or *they found*, signifies the *onset to battle*, as Judg. 1. 5. 1 Sam



25 And the children of Anah *were* these: Dishon, and Aholibamah the laughter of Anah.

26 And these *are* the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran.

27 The children of Ezer *are*

31. 3. 1 Kings 13. 24. 2 Chron. 22. 8. Num. 35. 27, etc. His arguments, however, on the whole, go more strongly to refute the adverse position, than to establish his own, and therefore the current of opinion among modern commentators sets rather in favor of, (2.) The Vulgate rendering of *warm springs*. This view of the subject is presented most strongly in the words of Mr. Bryant, in his 'Observations upon some passages of Scripture,' p. 26. 'Why the word יַמִּים *yemim*, is here rendered mules, I know not; and why in some other versions it is expressed giants. It manifestly denotes *waters*; and it is so translated in the Syr. version; and by *aquas calidas* in the Vulgate. The account given in Scripture is short, and was well understood by the persons to whom it is addressed, and undoubtedly related to water. The circumstance mentioned must have been of consequence, otherwise there would have been no necessity to specify the person by whom it was effected. We should therefore read, that instead of *mules* Anah found out *water* in the wilderness: but to what does the history amount! Every known spring must have had somebody to have discovered it; so that Anah, if this be all, did no more than hundreds had done before. But to me there seems to be something of more importance in the account than at first appears, and for that reason the name of the person is recorded, as being of moment to those who lived in the vicinity of Edom, and were acquainted with the rites of Midian. It is to be observed, that the sacred writer, in speaking of Anah's first discovery of these waters, does not in-

these: Bilhan, and Zaavan, and Akan.

28 The children of Dishan *are* these; Uz, and Aran.

29 These *are* the dukes *that came* of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah,

form us when or where he was feeding his father's asses; but only that the event took place as he was feeding them. This may be found of some moment. I imagine that the latent purport of the history is this. As Anah was attending these animals in the desert, he observed that faculty with which they were endued, of snuffing the moisture of the air, and being by these means led to latent waters. Accordingly, either by the intimation of those which he fed, or by the traces of the wild brood, he was brought to the knowledge of these resources.' This interpretation is perhaps, of the two, entitled to preference; especially as it is said by travellers that springs of that description do actually exist in that region to the present day. Five or six miles south-east of the Dead Sea, towards Petra, and consequently in or near the region in which the Seirites, and afterwards the Edomites dwelt, is a place celebrated among the Greeks and Romans for its warm baths, and called by them Callirhoe. But it is scarcely to be expected that the passage will ever be cleared of all uncertainty.

29. *These are the dukes that came of Hori, among their dukes, &c.* Heb. לְאֻלְפֵהֶם *lealuphehem*, according to their dukes, i. e. according to their dukedoms. Thus, 'king' is frequently used in Scripture for 'kingdom,' particularly with the prophets. Is. 23. 15, 'Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the years of one king;' i. e. of one kingdom; viz. that of Babylon. Dan. 7. 17, 'These great beasts are four *kings* which shall arise out of the earth.' This is interpreted by the Holy Spirit

30 Duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these *are* the dukes that came of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir.

31 ¶ And <sup>p</sup> these *are* the kings that reigned in the land of Edom,

p 1 Chron. 1. 43.

himself of kingdoms; v. 23: 'The fourth beast shall be the fourth *kingdom* upon earth.' Thus, also, Rev. 17. 42, 'And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten *kings*;' i. e. ten *kingdoms*. So where it is said, 2 Kings 11. 19, 'And he sat in the throne *of the kings*,' another prophet, in allusion to the same event, says, 2 Chron. 23. 20, 'And set the king upon the throne *of the kingdom*.' This peculiarity of diction is very important to be borne in mind in the interpretation of prophecy. These seven sons of Seir possessed their dukedoms or chieftainships simultaneously in different parts of the land, instead of succeeding each other, like the kings mentioned below.

31. *These are the kings that reigned, &c. before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.* Whether these kings were descendants of Esau or of Seir, it is impossible to say. As the two races seem to have been mingled together, they might have been the blended issue of both. But a point of still greater moment, and equally difficult of solution, is to account for the expression 'before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.' It is objected, that as this implies that there *was* a king reigning in Israel at the time the present record was written, and as there was no king thus reigning till some centuries after the death of Moses, therefore Moses himself could not have been its author. To this it may be replied.

1.) That there is nothing incredible in the supposition of Moses having written it; however, it may be said that this is cutting the knot, instead of untying it. Not to remark that the word 'king' may be taken in a general sense for any *chief*

before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

32 And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah.

33 And Bela died, and Jobab the

ruler or governor, as in Deut. 33. 5. Judg. 17. 6. Ps. 119. 46. Luke 22. 25. Acts 9. 15., it is certain that Moses had before, Gen. 35. 11. recorded the prediction that 'kings should come out of the loins' of Jacob, and why may he not have been prompted by inspiration to foretel, in this incidental way, the fulfilment of this promise? But although this be a satisfactory reply, yet, (2.) It can scarcely be doubted by any one who compares the account contained v. 31—43 with 1 Chron. 1. 43—54, that the one has been taken from the other; and the probability we think is much stronger that the genealogy in Genesis is a copy from that in Chronicles, than that the reverse is the case. It is unquestionable that similar interpolations are made also by later writers, and we see no reason why this may not be regarded as one?—As such things are usually estimated among men, it must have been trying to the seed of Jacob, groaning in Egyptian bondage, to know that the descendants of Esau had in the mean time become great and powerful, and had the royal dignity established among them. But though the honors of Esau's race blossomed early, they soon decayed; while, on the other hand, the issue of Israel eventually rose into a pre-eminence, which, either temporally or spiritually, was designed to be everlasting.—¶ *Over the children of Israel.* Heb. לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *liane Yisrael*, to the sons, or children of Israel; i. e. for or among them; for their advantage. Gr. ἐν Ἰσραὴλ, in Israel. Very nice distinctions are often made in the original by the use of the minor words and connectives, which are lost sight

son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead.

34 And Jacob died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead.

35 And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad (who smote Midian in the field of Moab) reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith.

36 And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead.

37 And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth *by* the river reigned in his stead.

38 And Saul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead.

of in a version. This is particularly the case in regard to terms and phrases which relate to *government*, where the idea of *absolute despotic rule* finds but little countenance from the institutions of the Israelites. Thus, in like manner, it would seem that the popular title of the present monarch of France, to wit, *King of the French*, was preferred to that of *King of France*, because it carried with it a more distinct recognition of the *will of the people* in conferring the office upon him.

34. *Land of Temani.* That is, of the Temanites; who derived their name from the grandson of Esau called duke Teman, v. 15. From this region came Eliphaz, *the Temanite*, one of the three friends of Job.

40. *These are the names of the dukes, &c.* From a view of the whole chapter it would seem that the government of the Edomites was at first ducal; that is to say, patriarchal, in which families are governed by heads or chiefs, very much after the manner of the clans in the highlands of Scotland, or the Indian tribes of our own country; that in process of time as the people increased, a change took place and a dynasty of eight kings succeeded. As a new enu-

39 And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and <sup>1</sup> Hadar reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

40 And these *are* the names of <sup>1</sup> the dukes *that came* of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke Alvah, duke Jetheth,

41 Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,

42 Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,

43 Duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these *be* the dukes of Edom, accord-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. 1. 50.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. 1. 51.

meration of dukes occurs from v. 40 to the end of the chapter, some have inferred from this that another change took place, by which the government of dukes was again restored. Certain it is, that upon Israel's coming out of Egypt mention is made Ex. 15. 15, of the 'dukes of Edom,' and while passing through the wilderness they sent to the 'king of Edom,' Numb. 20. 14, from which it appears that the royal dynasty was then in power. And as these eight kings are said to have reigned *before* any king reigned in Israel, v. 31, it is perhaps to be inferred that such a change as that suggested above had taken place. Yet, on the other hand, if we regard v. 31—39 as an interpolation, then the portion from v. 40 to the end of the chapter is to be taken in immediate connexion with v. 29, and understood as a continuation of that account, the former part giving us a list of the Horite dukes, and the latter of those of the line of Esau.

43. *In the land of their possession.* That is, the land of their firm, fixed, abiding possession. The expression conveys a tacit allusion to the contrast between the mode of Esau's and of Jacob's possessing severally their respective inheritances. The one is represented

ing to their habitations, in the land of their possession: he is Esau, the father of the Edomites.

as holding his by a permanent tenure, and therefore it is called *the land of his possession*, whereas, when Canaan is spoken of as the allotment of Jacob, it is termed *the land of his sojourning*. And so of Abraham and Isaac. They were pilgrims and not possessors.

#### CHAP. XXXVII.

WE here enter upon one of the most remarkable and interesting portions of the whole mass of sacred history. The life and fortunes of Joseph, embracing, with the exception of two chapters, the residue of the book of Genesis, or about one-fourth of the whole, form a story of unrivalled attraction, whether we consider the simplicity and beauty of the narrative, the touching pathos of the events related, or the vastly important moral lessons which it teaches. Viewed as an illustration of the doctrine of a particular Providence, bringing to pass the grandest results from the most apparently trivial events, nothing can be more significant or striking. It has all the effect of a pictorial delineation. While the recital flows on with all the charm of a highly-wrought tale of fiction, we are still assured of the *truth* and *reality* of every incident, and feel that we are contemplating an epitome of the dispensations of that overruling Power which is 'wonderful in counsel and mighty in operation'—which controls the free and voluntary action of intelligent creatures, even when prompted by a spirit of malevolence and rebellion, so as to render them subservient to the accomplishment of those very plans which they are intent upon defeating, while the guilt of the agents remains resting upon them in all its unabated aggravations. But while this is doubtless the most important aspect

#### CHAP. XXXVII.

AND Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

\* ch. 17. 8. & 23. 4. & 36. 7. Hebr. 11. 9.

in which the history of Joseph is to be viewed, it is still worth while to observe that merely as a human composition, as a specimen of simple, graceful, eloquent, and pathetic narrative, it is universally conceded that it has no parallel. We find in it all that gives beauty to the finest drama—a perfect unity of design; a richness and variety of incident involving the plot in obscurity, yet gradually drawing to its intended development; and the whole issuing happily, rewarding pre-eminent virtue with appropriate honors and blessings, and visiting iniquity with deserved humiliation and punishment. It is a story which persons of all ages, and minds of all orders, peruse with equal interest; and the degree of secret moral influence which the spotless example of Joseph has exercised upon countless numbers of the readers of the Scriptures, can never be appreciated till the day of the revelation of all things. We behold in him one who in every period of life, in every change of condition, in every variety of relation, secures our confidence, our respect, our love. In adversity, we see him evincing the most exemplary patience and resignation; in temptation, the most inflexible firmness; in exaltation, the most unaffected simplicity, integrity, gentleness, and humility. Whether as a son, a brother, a servant; a father, a master, a ruler, we behold him exhibiting a deportment equally amiable and praiseworthy; and the respect which we entertain for the sagacity of the statesman and the penetration of the prophet, mingles with our profound admiration of the purity of the saint. But we leave it to the sequel to disclose, in all their richness, these interesting traits of biography and history.

1. *Jacob dwelt in the land where his fa-*

2 These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was

with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father<sup>b</sup> their evil report.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 22, 23, 24.

ther was a stranger. Heb. בארץ מגוריו *bearetz megure abiv*, in the land of his father's sojourning; where 'father's' may be taken as a collect. sing. including Abraham as well as Isaac. The character of 'sojourners' was common to the patriarchs, and as Jacob dwelt in the same country with his forefathers, he dwelt in the same way, and under the influence of the same motives. This he afterwards confessed to Pharaoh. Though he had bought a small piece of ground in the country, yet he still was, and counted himself, a stranger and a sojourner in the land of Canaan. Heaven was the country which he regarded as his possession, his inheritance, his home.

2. These are the generations of Joseph. Heb. הולדותיו *toledoth*, births: i. e. the family history. That the original signifies something more than mere *genealogy*, is obvious from the matter which the history contains, although it can hardly be taken in the extended and general sense of our word *history*. When the sacred writer, therefore, says, 'these are the generations of Jacob,' he may either refer to what goes before, implying that these were the principal events in the personal and domestic history of Jacob, of which, being about to pass to another subject, he says no more at present; or it may refer to what follows, in which case the sense will be that this is the family history of Jacob, an account of the most important incidents that befel his house, but more especially in respect to Joseph, who henceforward becomes the prominent theme of the story. The date of this narrative is to be placed twelve years before Isaac's death, when he was 168 years old, and Jacob 108; for if Joseph were 39 when

Jacob was 130, (compare Gen. 41. 46, with 45. 2. and 47. 9,) it will follow that Joseph was born when Jacob was 91, and consequently when he was 17 his father was 108. But when Isaac died at the age of 180, Jacob was 120, as he was born when Isaac was 60; therefore Joseph's age of 17, and Jacob's of 108, will bring the date of his being sold into Egypt, twelve years prior to the death of Isaac. — ¶ Joseph being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock, &c. Heb. הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת אֶחָיו בַּצֹּאן *hayah roeh eth ehav batzton*, literally, was tending, or acting the shepherd over, his brethren in the flock. However uncouth to our ears the phraseology, this is undoubtedly the exact rendering, and the import of the words we take to be, that Joseph was charged with the superintendence of his brethren, particularly the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. Whether this was owing merely to the fond favoritism of his father, or to his superior fidelity, capacity, and diligence in the discharge of his duties, we know not; but we cannot but infer from the text that such was the fact, that in some way the management and direction of the flocks and their keepers was entrusted to him. If so, his making report to his father of the conduct of his brethren, instead of being an act of officious intermeddling, was in fact but the discharge of an important part of his duty; 'for it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.' From the Note on Gen. 29. 3, it will be seen that the term 'flocks,' as used by the sacred writers, frequently carries with it by implication the idea of 'shepherds' or 'keepers,' to whose care they were consigned. See the Note also on Gen. 47. 6. — ¶ And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah. Heb. וְהָיָה נָעִי וְהָיָה נָעִי

*vehu naar, and he a lad.* From a careful inspection of the original we are persuaded that the exact shade of meaning is not represented here by the rendering of our version. The definite article 'the,' as well as the supplemental word 'was,' we conceive to have been introduced without authority, as there is nothing to countenance them in the Hebrew. The correct translation is doubtless the following; 'Joseph being seventeen years old, was tending his brethren among the flocks, and he a (mere) lad, (even) the sons of Bilhah, &c.' The mention of his youth is brought in parenthetically, as something peculiarly worthy of notice, while the clause 'with the sons of Bilhah, &c.' is designed to limit and specify the term 'brethren' going before. As this construction, however, is somewhat new, and as it can be established only by an appeal to the common diction of the sacred writers, we shall briefly advert to a few passages which go strongly to confirm it. The common translation, it will be observed, renders אֶת אֶחָיו *eth ehav, by with his brethren.* But the particle אֶת *eth* very generally follows the verb רָעָה *raah*, as the sign of the accusative, and not as a preposition. Thus Gen. 30. 36, 'And Jacob אֶת צֹאן רָעָה *eth* אֶת צֹאן *eth* fed the flocks of Laban.' 2 Sam. 7. 7, 'Whom I commanded אֶת עַמִּי לְרַעֲתָהּ *eth* אֶת עַמִּי *eth* to feed my people Israel.' Jer. 23. 2, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors אֶת עַמִּי הָרָעִים *eth* אֶת עַמִּי *eth* that feed my people.' Indeed, in no other instance throughout the Bible, if the present be excepted, does אֶת follow רָעָה as a preposition. Again, according to the established version, רָעָה בַצֹּאן *roeh batzron* signifies to feed or tend the flock, as if רָעָה governed its accusative by the interposition of the particle ל. But this is contrary to usage in every instance in the Heb. Scriptures except two, and those are undoubtedly cases precisely parallel to the present, in which the particle signifies *in* or *among*. The first occurs 1 Sam. 16. 11, 'There

remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he רָעָה בַצֹּאן *keepeth the sheep.*' The second is found 1 Sam. 17. 34, 'And David said unto Saul, Thy servant רָעָה דִּידָהּ לְאָבִיו בַּצֹּאן *kept his father's sheep.*' In both these cases we doubt not the true rendering is that David performed the office of a shepherd-overseer in or among the flocks, just as we say of a military officer, he commanded in the army. As to the true meaning of רָעָה, it will be found that all the Lexicons give it the sense of *overseeing, governing, presiding over, superintending*, and such, we cannot question, is its import here, in respect to Joseph. This circumstance, in all probability, first prompted the envious feelings of his brethren, which were greatly enhanced by the incident mentioned below.—¶ Brought unto his father their evil report. That is, an evil report concerning them. It may be remarked, too, that the Heb. has אֲבִיהֶם, *abihem, their father*, instead of אָבִיו, *his father*, as our translators have rendered it. Heb. אֶת דִּבְחָם רָעָה *eth dibbatham raah.* The original דִּבְחָהּ *dibbah*, signifies a report of infamy, scandalous information. The term is in itself peculiarly expressive and emphatic, but it has here an augmented sense by the addition of the epithet רָעָה *raah, evil*, as if it was intended to convey the idea of some peculiar, flagrant, enormous act of wickedness, the report of which Joseph carried to his father. Chal. 'Their evil accusation.' What this conduct was, we are not informed. The silence of the sacred oracles has veiled it from human view till the judgment day. Suffice it for us to know, that the feelings of Joseph were wounded by the bad behaviour of his brethren, and that he could not rest easy without disclosing the particulars to his father. In this he is to be commended, as it was in fact performing a kind and brotherly office. Though a child should not be indulged

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was*

° the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours.

° ch. 44. 20.

by his parents in reporting every trivial tale to the disadvantage of his brothers or sisters, yet some offences are so gross that they ought not to be concealed. Parents should be made acquainted with them that they may correct them, or if that cannot be, that they may, as far as possible, counteract their ill effects. The witnesses of evil conduct often contract no small part of its criminality by neglecting or refusing to make it known.

3. *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because, &c.* Joseph held this high place in his father's affections, not only because he was the first-born son of his best beloved wife, and the child of many prayers, but because he was the son of his old age. This latter expression, however, as used in the original, is not of very definite import, nor if taken as usually understood, is it easy to see precisely the ground of the assertion. Benjamin was much more the son of his old age than Joseph; and it cannot well be supposed that Joseph was younger than Zebulun and Dinah. In fact, Jacob was an old man before any of his children were born. How then is the language to be understood? The original בן זקנים לו *ben zekunim lo*, is literally rendered *son of old age to him*, which in the Chal. is paraphrased by 'wise son,' taking the phrase 'son of old age,' to be equivalent to 'son of wisdom,' the ideas of *age* and *wisdom* being intimately related. In this case the idiom is to be considered the same with that which appears in the expressions, 'son of wickedness,' 'son of perdition,' 'son of strength,' 'son of peace.' According to this the idea is, that Joseph, even in his early years, had the wisdom of a sage; and perhaps, as hinted above, it was on this account that he was preferred to the office

of superintendent over his brethren. For ourselves, although the common interpretation does no violence to the original, we feel strongly inclined to favor this sense of the phrase. It affords a more worthy reason for Jacob's loving him so intensely than the time of his birth. The time of birth would probably have ingratiated the oldest son, rather than the youngest but one or two, with his father, had not Reuben been utterly unworthy of Jacob's fondness. Certain it is, that Joseph was very wise in his early years; and it is no less certain that a wise son makes a fond as well as a glad father.—¶ *He made him a coat of many colors.* That is, ordered or procured it to be made; not that he did it by his own personal act. See Note on Gen. 3. 21. But there is great doubt as to the garment itself, nor could the common reader imagine to what a vast variety of interpretations the expression 'coat of many colors' has given rise. The Heb. phrase is כְּתֹנֶת עֲשֵׂרִים *kethoneth passim*, properly signifying *coat of pieces*. The Chal. has 'tunic of strips or shreds.' Gr. χιτῶνα ποικίλον, *parti-colored or variegated coat*. Vulg. 'Tunicam polymitam,' *embroidered coat*. Syr. 'Fringed tunic.' The phrase occurs only here and 2 Sam. 13. 18, 'And she had a garment of *divers colors*' (Heb. כְּתֹנֶת עֲשֵׂרִים *coat of pieces*) upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled; from which it is plain that it was a garment worn as a mark of distinction. But whether the common rendering 'coat of many colors,' gives the true import of the original, may justly be doubted. As the Heb. has simply 'coat of pieces,' it is a matter of inference only to suppose that these 'pieces' were of different 'colors,' although not improbable that this was the case. But it would

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they <sup>d</sup> hated

a ch. 27. 41. & 49. 23.

be important to show that the art of interweaving a piece in various colors was at this time actually discovered. Judging from the information offered by the present passage, we should rather infer that it was not; for the peculiar term פֶּסֶם *pieces* here employed, makes it probable that the agreeable effect resulting from a combination of colors was obtained, if at all, by patch-work in the first instance, and in after-times by being wrought with a needle. Such variegated garments were no doubt worn as they still are in the East at this day, but as to Joseph's coat, Braunius, in his great work 'On the Dress of the Jewish Priests,' contends that it was a long robe reaching to the ankles and wrists, and that the word 'pieces' refers, not to the body of the garment, but solely to the borders of the skirts and sleeves, which were furnished with an ornamental fringe, composed, perhaps, of parti-colored 'pieces.' The body of it was probably white, corresponding with the 'stole,' of which see Note on Gen. 27. 15. This coat we cannot but regard, like the 'goodly raiment' of Jacob, as a *badge of the birthright*, which we are expressly taught, 1 Chron. 5. 1, having been forfeited by Reuben, was transferred to Joseph; and we regard it as highly probable that it was this circumstance, more than any other, which inflamed the envy of his brethren; so that as Esau, under the galling sense of his lost superiority, laid wait for the life of his brother Jacob, in like manner the brethren of Joseph plotted against his innocent blood. The birthright-robe we have before ventured to consider as an emblem of the resurrection-garments of the saints, and we suppose that a direct allusion to the dipping of Joseph's coat in the blood of the kid is made in the

him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

expression, Rev. 7. 14, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and *made them white in the blood of the Lamb*;' or Gr. 'by the blood of the Lamb;' i. e. by patiently suffering even unto the shedding of their own blood in the cause of the Lamb, and by the merits of the Lamb's blood, they have entitled themselves to be clothed with the white robes, indicative of the spiritual and eternal blessings which belong to 'the general assembly and church of the *first-born*, whose names are written in heaven.'

4. *They hated him.* This result showed that Jacob acted unwisely in distinguishing Joseph from his brethren by this mark of his regard. It seemed to be a palpable, invidious, and premature taking away of the birth-right from Reuben and giving it to the first-born of his beloved wife. The birth-right was indeed to be Joseph's; and it was due to him as the eldest son of Rachel, when the first-born son of Leah had forfeited it. But, as might have been expected, Joseph was at once exposed to the envy of his brethren by this mark of his father's fondness; and the effects of that envy cost the good old man many years of pungent affliction. Parents indeed cannot well avoid loving most affectionately those children who best deserve their love, nor is it wrong they should. But they have great need of caution lest by imprudent testimonies of their regard, they injure instead of benefitting the children whom they love. Joseph might have lived happily in his father's house without being clothed with a garment of divers colors, but he could not wear it without encountering the hatred of all his brethren. Yet let us not blame Joseph for accepting this token of his



5 ¶ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren : and they hated him yet the more.

father's love. It was not his province to affect wisdom superior to that of his aged parent, nor would it have become him to suspect all the evil that was in the hearts of his brethren. Only the bad are ready to suspect that others are bad, till experience makes them acquainted with the corruption that abounds in the world.—¶ *Could not speak peaceably unto him.* That is, they could not through the moral inability growing out of the extreme aversion of their hearts towards him. Thus Mat. 12. 34, 'How can ye, being evil, speak good things?' It is evident at a glance that an inability like this is utterly inexcusable, and the more so in proportion to the real worth and excellence of the person towards whom the hatred exists. How aggravated then is the guilt of that inability which prevents sinners from loving and serving God! The expression 'could not speak peaceably unto him,' does not, as with us, imply that they were continually quarreling with him, but they could not accost him in a friendly manner; they could not wish him well, nor bestow upon him the usual salutations which were every where current among those who were not openly and avowedly at variance with each other. The original is לְשָׁלוֹם *leshalom*, to peace, and the Eastern mode of salutation still is שָׁלוֹם *shalom leka*, peace be to thee. (Arab. *salam*); and as the invocation of peace comprehends all kinds of blessings, temporal and spiritual, hence they are careful not to utter it to those to whom they do not wish well, as is often the case with the Turks towards the Christians, and the withholding it may generally be considered as a mark of hostility, and an evidence that when an opportunity occurs they will not scruple to do you an injury. Viewed in this light, the refusal of Joseph's brethren to exchange

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed :

with him the common civilities of friends and acquaintances showed a very alienated and exasperated state of heart. And this circumstance, taken in connexion with the sequel of their conduct, affords a most impressive commentary upon the baleful effects of envy, and the importance of checking it in the germ. Its fruits, when they have had time to ripen, are always deadly. Joseph's brethren, when first seized with this fiendish passion, did not proceed at once to the extremes of cruelty. They could not, indeed, 'speak peaceably' to him, but they entertained no thoughts of killing him till their envy had by indulgence attained a greater degree of strength. Gradually, however, their malice assumed a deeper hue, and from the character of their intentions they contracted the guilt of murder before they had shed it. In the sight of men they were chargeable with intended murder when they cast Joseph into the pit; but in the sight of God they were chargeable with this crime as soon as they began to hate Joseph; for 'he that hateth his brother in his heart, is a murderer.'

5. *And Joseph dreamed a dream, &c.* We take this verse to be a general and summary declaration of that which is particularly detailed in the ensuing verses; just as we understand Gen. 1. 1, as a summary of the six days' work afterward minutely described. We thus avoid the appearance of repetition in the sacred writer. Joseph was destined to high honor before he came into the world, and it pleased God now to favor him with a presage of his exaltation in a dream that made a deep impression on his mind. This might be expected to be the case with a dream supernaturally imparted. Dreams coming from God to announce future events would of

7 For • behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright ; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

• ch. 42. 6, 9. & 43. 26. & 44. 14.

course differ in this respect from such as were mere illusions of the fancy. When God spake to men in these nocturnal visitations, he usually made his voice to be recognized as his, and distinguished from the wild reveries of a wandering imagination, if in no other way, at least by the effects which they produced upon the minds of the subject of them. In the present instance, the Most High, by pre-intimating in dreams what he was about to effect, would make it clear, when the course of events came afterwards to be reviewed, that nothing had happened fortuitously, but every thing in pursuance of a previous plan, however intricate and perplexed the steps by which it was brought about. Whether Joseph acted wisely in telling his dream, may be questioned ; but it was evidently done in all the simplicity of a child-like heart, without the remotest idea of inflaming a resentment already too strong. But as the dream was obviously suggested by God himself, so we cannot doubt that Joseph was secretly directed by an overruling Providence in relating it. For although his brethren made a very bad use of it, yet that use of it, such as it was, tended without their knowledge, and against their inclination, to its fulfilment. God overrules not only the imprudence of his friends, but the wickedness of his enemies, to the accomplishment of his own pleasure. —¶ *They hated him yet the more.* The scope of the dream, whatever might be the particular manner of its fulfilment, evidently pointed to some kind of future advancement and ascendancy destined for Joseph, and it is not unlikely that his brethren had

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us ? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us ? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

a secret persuasion that it was prophetic. The idea, therefore, that God, as well as Jacob, had determined to honor him, provoked them the more. Such were the operations of malice in Cain towards Abel, in Esau towards Jacob, in Saul towards David, and in the Scribes and Pharisees towards the Lord of glory.

7. *Behold, we were binding sheaves, &c.* The imagery employed in this dream was not drawn from objects or occupations with which Jacob's sons, a family of nomades, were most familiar, nor did Joseph himself yet know that his exaltation was to be procured by the interpretation of another dream respecting the fruits of the earth, or that his brethren were to bow down to him for a supply of that precious commodity. The propriety and beauty of the images used in the language of prophecy, are best understood when the prophecies are accomplished.

8. *And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou, &c.* The general signification of this dream was very obvious. Joseph's brethren undoubtedly perceived it at once, as clearly as Joseph himself, if not more so. 'What,' say they, 'do you imagine that all of us will ever bow down to you ? Shall we be subject to our own younger brother ? Has he the presumption to hope that we ever shall ?' Moved with the same indignant feelings with which our Saviour informs us that he himself would be received, they say, in effect, 'We will not have this man to rule over us.' Such is our native pride and stoutness of spirit, that we cannot bear the thought of being subject to those who have been our

9 ¶ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more : and behold ' the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father,

† ch. 46. 29.

equals or inferiors. But let us remember that 'promotion cometh not from the south, nor from the east, nor from the west ; it is the Lord that putteth down one, and setteth up another ; and who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ?'

9. *He dreamed yet another dream.* This second dream, which is evidently of the same import with the first, though representing his exaltation by brighter colors, was vouchsafed, doubtless, with a view to *confirm the certainty* of the event predicted. The same reason was afterward assigned by Joseph for the duplication of Pharaoh's dream, Gen. 41. 32, 'And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice ; it is because the thing is established by God ;' i. e. most firmly fixed in the divine determination. If the narrator was envied by his brethren when they heard the former dream, it was to be expected that their spirits would be kindled into rage when they heard this also. 'God speaketh once, yea twice, unto men ; but man perceiveth it not.' Here we find men so far from perceiving what God said, when they heard it twice, that they were filled with the blackest malice against the child who told them what God had spoken to him. Hatred and envy turn good into evil, and fill the minds of wicked men with an irreconcilable aversion to the word and the providence of God. If Joseph's dreams had been the mere roavings of the fancy in sleep, they were not worth the minding ; but if they were indeed from God, and signified the future advancement of Joseph, his brethren sinned not only against the lad, but

and to his brethren : and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed ? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ?

‡ ch. 27. 29

against the Lord himself, when they were displeased with them. What were they that they should resist or make light of the counsels of the Most High ?—¶ *The sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.* Rather, 'eleven stars' simply. There is nothing in the original to require or warrant the use of the article 'the' in our translation. The scope of the dream was in the main the same with that of the former. But in order to secure greater regard to the oracle, the scenery is laid in heaven. Joseph's brethren had made light of the vision of the sheaves growing upon the earth ; God now directs their view to the luminaries above, as something which would more forcibly seize their attention and inspire reverence.

10. *And his father rebuked him, and said unto him, &c.* Jacob himself no doubt entertained different views from his sons concerning Joseph's dreams, though he seems, from motives of policy, to have affected to treat them with contempt. It is said in immediate connexion, v. 11, that 'his father observed the saying ;' i. e. pondered the dreams in his heart. He thought it possible, if not certain, that they came from God ; and if so, they merited the closest attention ; for God says nothing that is false or unimportant. In his reproof, therefore, he meant not so much to check vanity or ambition in Joseph himself, as to dispel the hostile feelings of his other children, who were filled with indignation against him. But it may be questioned whether in thus apparently siding with them, he took the

11 And <sup>b</sup> his brethren envied him; but his father <sup>i</sup> observed the saying.

12 ¶ And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

<sup>b</sup> Acts 7. 9. <sup>i</sup> Dan. 7. 28. Luke 2. 19. 51.

fairest or wisest method to allay the fierce passions that threatened the repose and safety of his favorite son. He seems rather to have given too much countenance to their ill nature and to have furnished them with a fair pretence for alleging that Joseph's dreams were the fruit of his own pride, and not the dictates of the Spirit of God.—¶ *Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren bow down to thee?* A very natural exposition is here given of the dream in such a manner as to suggest that it could not be accomplished. The head of a family might, in figurative language, be represented by the sun; the mother and mistress of a family by the moon; and the children of a family by the stars. Thus Achmet, the Persian, in his *Oneirocriticon*, or work on the *interpretation of dreams*, explained according to the sense of the ancient Persian and Grecian magi, says, 'If any one dream that he commands all the stars, (it signifies) that he will rule over all people.' (Heideg. Hist. Pat. vol. 2. p. 533). But according to this interpretation, it had the appearance of absurdity. Joseph would not wish nor expect that his father should do him obeisance. It would be strange too if his brethren, who were all older than himself, did all bow down to him; and it was impossible that his mother could do it, who was already in her grave. But it is not necessary to the accomplishment of a dream, that every object which presented itself to the fancy should have something correspondent to it in the event, but only that the general idea should agree with what was afterwards to happen. Thus in parables, it would be unreasonable to seek a distinct

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the *flock* in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am* I.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well

meaning for every circumstance employed in stating and adorning them. It is certain that Rachel could not bow down to Joseph, nor is it absolutely certain that any of Jacob's wives went down with him to Egypt; but it is certain that Jacob himself paid homage to Joseph, Gen. 43. 11, before he knew that he was alive, and that after he did know it he depended upon him for support. This was sufficient to justify the pertinency of the dream. The words of God, if rightly understood, will be found faithful and true; but we are not to think that he is under any obligation to verify the comments which we may put upon them.—¶ *Observed the saying.* Heb. שמר את הדבר *shamar eth haddabar*, kept the word, or the matter; i. e. laid it to heart, reflected deeply upon it. Thus it is said of Mary, the mother of Jesus, Luke 2. 19, 51, 'But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.' So also, Dan. 7. 28, 'As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart.'

12. *Went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.* The vale of Hebron, where Jacob now was, did not perhaps contain sufficient pasturage for his flocks. It was at or near Shechem that Jacob had formerly bought a piece of ground, Gen. 33. 19, the right to which he doubtless still retained; and this was probably the reason of sending hither his flocks, though the distance from Hebron was sixty miles.

14. *See whether it be well with thy brethren.* Heb. ראה את שלום *ra'ah eth shalom*, see the peace, or the welfare; i. e.

with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of <sup>k</sup>Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 ¶ And a certain man found him, and behold, *he was* wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

<sup>k</sup> ch. 35. 27.

go and see how it fares with thy brethren and the flocks. Though entertaining a peculiar regard for the best of his sons, yet the welfare of all of them was dear to Jacob, and from former occurrences, Gen. 34. 25—31, he would naturally suppose that Shechem would be a place of dangerous-neighborhood. The former inhabitants of the place had indeed been destroyed, but the memory of that bloody transaction no doubt still lived over that whole vicinity, and nothing was more natural, under these circumstances, than the father's anxiety respecting his children. He accordingly sends Joseph to bring him intelligence of their condition. How little did either father or son think of the consequences of that paternal mission! Joseph leaves his father's house never, never, to return to it more! Who can tell what a day may bring forth? The last meeting, the last parting; the last coming in and going out; the last time of speaking and of hearing; the last of every thing will soon overtake us all!

15. *A certain man found him, &c.* Joseph did not find it so easy as he had supposed to gain the intelligence which his father desired. His brethren were not in Shechem; but he did not return to tell his father that they could not be found. He knew the patriarch's anxiety, and felt himself interested in the welfare of his brethren. He therefore holds on his way in quest of them, and after wandering about for some time in the field, that is, in the *region or country* adjacent to Shechem, he falls in with a

16 And he said, I seek my brethren: <sup>l</sup>tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks*.

17 And the man said, They are departed hence: for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in <sup>m</sup>Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar

<sup>l</sup> Cant. 1. 7.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Kings 6. 13.

stranger, one acquainted with the family, who informs him that they had in all probability gone to Dothan. Thither, accordingly, he goes without delay, and there meets with his brethren, though he found too much reason, for the present, to lament his success. But of this more in the sequel. Dothan was situated from eight to twelve miles north of Samaria (Sebaste), which was six miles beyond Shechem, in going from Jerusalem; so that it was about seventeen miles north of Shechem, and near Mount Gilboa, making the whole distance from Hebron at least seventy miles.

18. *And when they saw him afar off, &c.—they conspired against him.* Heb. יִתְנַקְּלוּ *yithnakkelu*, they craftily conspired. Gr. ἐπονομεύοντο, they malignantly plotted. The original term occurs also Ps. 105. 25, in reference to the conduct of the Egyptians towards Israel; 'He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal subtilly (הִתְנַקְּלוּ *hithnakkellu*) with his servants.' So also Num. 25. 18, respecting the insidious plots of the Midianites; 'For they vex you with their wiles (בִּנְכַל־יָדָם *beniklehem*) wherewith they have beguiled you (נִכְלָהוּ *nikkelu*).' We read of very cruel actions performed, in different ages, by the degenerate sons of Adam, but it would not be easy to find a parallel in history to the cruel intentions and the cruel conduct of Joseph's brethren. Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, and has left a name of infamy to all the generations of mankind. But where shall we

off, even before he came near unto them, "they conspired against him to slay him.

19 And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Sam. 19. 1. Ps. 31. 13. & 37. 12, 32. & 94. 21. Matt. 27. 1. Mark 14. 1. John 11. 53. Acts 23. 12.

find nine men conspiring at once to kill a brother—a brother whose amiable qualities deserved their warmest love—a brother who tenderly loved them, and was in the very act of showing his love to them at the time when their fury broke loose upon him! Joseph had too good reason, as David afterwards had, to say in the person of Christ, 'For my love they are mine adversaries.' The bare sight of him at a distance, rekindles all the foul passions that had before rankled in their breasts, and though crime is usually gradual in approaching its crisis, yet here the very first proposal is murder! Joseph, on the other hand, little thinking what they were plotting against him, draws nigh, in the fulness of his affectionate heart, overjoyed after all his wanderings and anxieties, to catch a sight of his brothers, with their tents and their flocks, afar off. How easy is it to imagine the tear of tenderness falling from his eye, while he delivers his father's greeting, and tells the tale of his disappointments and mistakes on the road, and to see his countenance flushed with delight at the thought of being again among friends, of having once more a protector. But alas! what a fearful revulsion were his feelings destined soon to experience! What pangs, like those of death, must have pierced him, when, instead of meeting the kind reception which he had anticipated, he finds himself attacked by assassins in the persons of brothers!

19. Behold this dreamer cometh. Heb. בעל החלומות *baal hahalomoth*, lord or master of dreams; a phraseology implying habitual usage or addictedness. See Note on Gen. 14. 13. It was, therefore,

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20 ° Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

° Prov. 1. 11, 16. & 6. 17. & 27. 4.

a contemptuous and taunting epithet, implying not merely the simple fact of his dreaming dreams, but his making, as it were, a trade of it. So his brethren in Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 23, are called 'lords of arrows,' Eng. 'archers,' from their habitual evil practices against Joseph. But why were they so much piqued at his dreams? Had they deemed them no more than mere illusions of the brain, the wandering images which float through the mind in the hours of sleep, they would doubtless have suffered them to pass away from their memories like other vanities of which they took no account. But it is plain that they considered them as intimations of the purpose of heaven, and as such they were bent upon frustrating them. Instead of merely aiming to humble the arrogance of a presumptuous boy, who fondly dreamed of rising into honors above his equals or superiors, they in reality declare their intention to thwart the counsels of Omnipotence. We may be amazed at such hardihood, but as long as we have upon record the infatuation of Pharaoh, of Saul, of Herod, and of the conspiracy of the Jews against Christ, we cannot deem it incredible.

20. Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, &c. This is their device for securing themselves from the reproach of the world and the indignation of their father. But where were they to find a pit deep enough to hide their crime from the eye of the All-Seeing?—¶ And we will say, &c. Lying seldom fails to accompany other sins. One sin needs another to guard it from detection; and he who can commit any gross crime

21 And <sup>p</sup> Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

22 And Reuben said unto them,

<sup>p</sup> ch. 42. 22.

will not scruple to utter a hundred lies to protect himself from the shame to which his conduct exposes him. If we would avoid the temptations to the lying lips which God abhors, let us beware of other sins.

21. *And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands.* The word 'delivered,' in this connexion, is designed to express the *intention* rather than the *act* of delivering him. He resolved within himself to deliver him; or at least to do his utmost towards it. This is an idiom of frequent occurrence in Hebrew. Thus Josh. 24. 9. 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel.' But we do not find, from any part of the history, that Balak engaged in actual conflict with Israel. He is said, therefore, to have warred against them, because he *intended* it, because he cherished a *hostile purpose*, and made his preparations accordingly. Thus too, Ex. 6. 18, 'And the magicians did so with their enchantments;' i. e. *attempted* to do so. See Note in loc. Ps. 68. 4, (Heb.) 'They that destroy me are mighty;' i. e. (Eng.) they that would destroy me. Ezek. 24. 13, 'Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged;' i. e. *I would have purged thee*. Gal. 5. 4, 'Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law;' i. e. *who would be justified, who seek to be justified*. —¶ *And said*; i. e. said to himself. This verse, we apprehend, expresses merely what passed in Reuben's mind; the next acquaints us with what he said to his brethren. —¶ *Let us not kill him.* Heb. לֹא נַכְכֵּם נֶפֶשׁ *lo nakken nephesh*, let us not smite him (as to his) soul; i. e. his life; so as to take away

his life. In like manner, Jer. 40. 14, 'Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent—*to slay thee.*' (Heb. לְהַכּוֹתְךָ נֶפֶשׁ *lehak kotheha nephesh*, to smite thee as to thy soul or life). Comp. in the original Deut. 19. 6, 11. Num. 35. 11, 15. Lev. 24. 17, 18. Gen. 19. 17.

22. *And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, &c.* From what we have formerly read of Reuben, Gen. 35. 22, we should not perhaps be surprised to find him foremost in any scene of wickedness that might be projected by the sons of Jacob. But let not the worst of men be held worse than they really are. We here behold him the only dissident in this council of blood. He was no doubt sincerely anxious to save Joseph, for the sake of his father whose life he knew was bound up in that of the lad. Having formerly himself pierced the heart of his father with a wound which could never be healed, charity requires us to suppose he had repented of his wickedness, and now wishes to make his father all the compensation in his power. He could not undo what had been done, but it would certainly be doing an eminent service to Jacob, could he save the life of his best-beloved son. But Reuben knew that it would be of no avail to protest with a loud voice against the meditated crime. Though he was the elder brother, and his opinion on that account entitled to the greater weight, yet he sees them so madly resolved upon their purpose that it would be in vain directly to remonstrate against it. He therefore takes a way that appears to him more effectual to defeat its execution. He pretends not to oppose the projected measure, but alleges that it would be unnatural to lay hands up

23 ¶ And it came to pass when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his

on him, and proposes to put him into a pit, whence he might be prevented making his escape till he died. We should hardly have thought that his proposition would be acceded to. It was evidently worse to kill him with hunger in a pit, by a lingering death, than to dispatch him at once. They could not think their guilt would be diminished by this barbarous mode of perpetrating the crime. But as they would thus spare their eyes the sight of blood shed by their own hands, they suffer their infatuated minds to be imposed upon by this false show of mercy, and by an act which really made their crime greater, rendered their remorse for the present less. So strangely does wickedness blind men's minds to the plainest truths! But the result was that Reuben prevailed to obtain a respite for Joseph.—¶ *That he might rid him, &c.* That is, in order that; to the end that. The drift of his counsel was, that at some convenient opportunity he might restore him to his father.

23. *They stripped Joseph out of his coat, &c.* All that had hitherto taken place occurred as Joseph was approaching. No sooner does he arrive than they discover the foul passions which had poisoned their hearts. With relentless hands they fall upon him, and disrobe him of his odious coat of many colors. How dearly did he purchase this honor, bestowed upon him by his father! They no doubt considered it as an insult to themselves, that he came to them decked with this trophy of his superior standing in the patriarch's regard. But if they had any reason to be offended, why was not their father the object of their resentment? The truth is, their treatment of him on account of his coat was an aggravation of their guilt, though they might have supposed an extenua-

tion or justification. His robe, the evidence of Jacob's tender regard, might have reminded them that to murder Joseph was in effect to murder their father. If it would not deprive him of life, it would deprive him of the comfort of life, and fill up the rest of his days with bitterness and sorrow.

24 And they took him, and cast

him into a pit. The original word is sometimes rendered 'cistern,' a term applied to hollow reservoirs excavated out of the solid rock for the purpose of holding rain water, or to natural cavities containing fountains, which were often walled up with stone to prevent the water from escaping. These 'pits' or 'cisterns,' from earthquakes or other accidents, were sometimes broken, so that they could no longer answer the end for which they were constructed. In allusion to this it is said, Jer. 2. 13, 'They have hewed them out pits, (Eng. 'cisterns,') broken pits, which can hold no water.' In such cases they were often employed as prisons or dungeons for the confinement of criminals. It was into a vault of this kind that the prophet Jeremiah was thrust, at the instigation of his enemies, Jer. 38. 6. And such, doubtless, was the 'pit' or 'cistern' into which Joseph was now put by his brethren. From such receptacles figuratively considered, does the Lord deliver his people. Zech. 9. 11, 'I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.' In view of this horrid cruelty how clear is it that the demons of envy and revenge had taken possession of their hearts. In vain he weeps, in vain he prays, in vain employs the tender names of father and brother to win their pity. For it was at this time, as they afterwards confessed in the Egyptian prison, Gen. 42. 21, that they 'saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought them, and they would not



him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

25 'And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company

¶ Prov. 30. 20. Amos. 6. 6.

hear.' Now too it was that Reuben shrunk from his own counsel and interceded in his behalf, saying, 'Do not sin against the child.' But all is unavailing. They immure him in the pit, and leave him, without raiment, food, or drink, to his fate. But Joseph would learn, in this dreary cavern, to bear those other sufferings that were allotted to him. He was sold to foreign merchants. He was carried into a strange land, to be again sold as a slave. He was cast into a prison where he lay for several years. But the remembrance of the pit wherein was no water, and of his fruitless cries for relief, would make him think, under all these circumstances of distress, that it was not so bad as it might have been, and as it once actually was.

25. *They sat down to eat bread.* This denotes something more than the partaking of an ordinary repast. As the children of Israel after forming the golden calf in the wilderness, are said to have '*sat down to eat* and rose up to play,' or, in other words, to have given themselves up to revelling and riot, so in the present case, in order to stifle the workings of conscience in their bosoms, Joseph's brethren probably sat down to a joyous feast, eating, drinking, and making merry, regardless of the tears and anguish of the victim of their envy. In allusion to his unfeeling conduct of Joseph's brethren, the prophet, Am. 6. 6, utters a severe denunciation against those who 'eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves of the midst of the stall, who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.' The sacred historian

of 'Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and 'balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

¶ ver. 28. 36.

¶ Jer. 8. 22.

in recording this atrocious conduct of Joseph's brethren, affixes a brand of perpetual infamy upon the founders of his race. In this he gives a proof of his fidelity, which is in itself an irrefragable proof of inspiration. An impostor would have spared the reputation of his ancestors. —¶ *Beheld a company of Ishmaelites.* Heb. *אֶרְחַת יִשְׁמָעֵלִים* *orchath yishmaelim*, a wayfaring band of Ishmaelites; i. e. a caravan. Gr. *ὁδοποροὶ Ἰσμαηλίται*, journeying Ishmaelites. Chal. 'A troop of Arabians.' The probability is that it is the same company of men who are here called 'Ishmaelites,' in v. 28, 'Midianites,' and in v. 36, (Heb.) 'Medanites;' this diversity of appellation being designed to intimate that they were a mixed people, made up of different races, and perhaps for that reason called in the Chal. 'Arabians,' which signifies mixed. 'Here,' says Dr. Vincent, (Com. and Nav. of the Anc. vol. 2. p. 262), 'upon opening the oldest history in the world, we find the Ishmaelites from Gilead conducting a caravan loaded with the spices of India, the balsam and myrrh of Hadramaut; and in the regular course of their traffic proceeding to Egypt for a market. The date of this transaction is more than seventeen centuries before the Christian era, and notwithstanding its antiquity, it has all the genuine features of a caravan crossing the Desert at the present hour.' The route of these Ishmaelites towards Egypt may be easily traced. They passed the Jordan, which is fordable in many places during the summer months, then took their way through the valley of Jezreel or Esdraelon, which lay but little northward from Dothan—a valley running from east to west, and leading

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we

slay our brother, and <sup>t</sup>conceal his blood?

<sup>t</sup> ch. 4. 10. ver. 20. Job. 16. 18.

from the Jordan, in the most convenient way, to the shores of the Mediterranean. Hence they could journey in the safest and most speedy manner to Egypt. Had they taken the other route through Hebron, where Jacob lived, the brethren of Joseph would scarcely have thought of selling him to the Ishmaelites. As to the articles which they were now carrying to Egypt, we may remark that the word translated *spicery* (נֶכֶתֶת *nekoth*) is supposed to signify a peculiar species of resinous gum called 'Styrax' or 'Storax.' This is the most fragrant of all the solid resins, and indeed of all known vegetable substances. It is obtained from a tree of the same name, said still to grow most plentifully in Syria, Cilicia, and Pamphilia. The pure native juice, flowing from incisions made in the trunk of the tree, and called 'storax in the tear,' is rarely met with, as the odoriferous parts are soon dissipated by evaporation. The common storax obtained of the druggists is mixed with saw-dust enough to thicken it and reduce it to a consistent mass. Its use is entirely limited to that of a perfume. The 'balm;' i. e. balsam, is usually called in the Scriptures 'balm of Gilead.' This is also obtained from a tree by incision of the trunk or branches, and is sometimes termed 'opobalsam;' i. e. the pitch of the balsam bush or tree. The balsam tree which yielded it, though not a native of Judea, was cultivated in great perfection on the plain of Jericho, in the neighborhood of the Jordan, having been introduced, according to Josephus, in the reign of Solomon, by the queen of Sheba, from Arabia Felix. The genuine balm was produced in small quantities, and was exceedingly valuable. Pliny says that 'when Alexander the Great was in Palestine, a spoonful of balm was all

that could be collected on a summer's day, and in the most plentiful year the great royal park of these trees yielded only six gallons, and the smaller only one gallon. It was consequently so dear that it sold for double its weight in silver.' According to Mr. Buckingham, since the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, the balsam tree has entirely disappeared; not one is now to be found. Its production appears to be confirmed principally to Arabia. It is chiefly used in the East as a cosmetic, though occasionally given as a medicine. 'Myrrh;' alias 'Ladanum;' is a gum-resin which exudes from a shrub, the *Cistus Ladaniferus*, abounding in Arabia, Candia, and in some parts of the Archipelago. The best sort is in dark-colored masses of the consistence of hard wax, which grows softer when handled. It has an agreeable smell, and a light, pungent, bitter taste. Grand Cairo in Egypt is still the grand mart for the myrrh trade. It is used both as an aromatic and a medicine. The practice of embalming in Egypt probably created a market for all these different kinds of spices.

26. *And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit, &c.* The passing by of the caravan of Ishmaelites at this particular juncture, is to be attributed to that overruling Providence which was secretly bringing its purposes to pass by the unwitting and unwilling agency of the various actors employed. The same divine Providence inspired Judah with the proposal to sell Joseph to these travelling merchants, and disposed the hearts of his brethren to approve of the suggestion. We do not read that Judah at first opposed the motion for killing Joseph, but it may be supposed that he soon relented, and proposed to have the sentence of death exchanged for a sen-

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and <sup>u</sup> let not our hand be upon him; for he is <sup>x</sup> our brother, and <sup>y</sup> our flesh: and his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by <sup>z</sup> Midianites, merchant-men; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the

<sup>u</sup> 1 Sam. 18. 17. <sup>x</sup> ch. 42. 21.  
<sup>y</sup> ch. 29. 14. <sup>z</sup> Judg. 6. 3. ch. 45. 4, 5.

tence of perpetual slavery. This measure he broaches by asking what *profit*, that is, what *advantage*, there would be in killing Joseph and concealing his blood. 'Our hands will still be stained with blood, though he should die of starvation.' Yet there may have been, as others suggest, a mixture of covetousness in the proposal, though we imagine his drift is mainly to intimate that it would be *better* to sell him than to slay him. If a balance were struck, the *advantage* would be found to be in the issue on the side of his preservation. It was well that this consideration had some degree of influence upon their hard hearts. Their consciences and their feelings told them, that they ought not to kill Joseph. But their envy told them that they must at least sell him, that they might remove him to a distance from themselves and their father's house. Their consciences had leave to dictate as far as their envy would permit, and no farther.

27. *His brethren were content.* Heb. יִשְׁמְעוּ *yishmeu*, *hearkened*; which in the original is equivalent to *consented* and *obeyed*.

28. *Then there passed by Midianites, merchant-men.* The proposal of Judah and the deliberations of his brethren probably took place in the interval between their first espying the caravan and its coming up. These words bring the parties together. It cannot be doubted that these Midianites are the same company as that before alluded to under the title of Ishmaelites. See Note on v.

pit, <sup>a</sup> and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for <sup>b</sup> twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 ¶ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit: and he <sup>c</sup> rent his clothes.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 105. 17. Acts 7. 9. <sup>b</sup> Matt. 27. 9.  
<sup>c</sup> Job 1. 20.

25.—¶ *Sold Joseph—for twenty pieces of silver.* The value of this sum was about five dollars of our money. A goodly price at which to value the son of a patriarch! How many thousand pieces of silver would Jacob have given for his redemption, had he known that his beloved son was become a slave? But we cannot forget that he who was infinitely greater than Joseph, was sold by one of his brethren, and of his disciples, for a price not much greater.

29. *And Reuben returned unto the pit, &c.* From this it is evident that Reuben was absent when Joseph was sold, and consequently did not consent at the time to the deed, however he might have done so afterward, in order to conceal his fate from his father. He had perhaps withdrawn himself from his brethren with the design of going by a circuitous route to the pit, taking him from thence, and sending him home in safety to his father. His intentions were good, and his plan seemed to be well concerted, but it was not successful. It was not by Reuben that Joseph was to be delivered. He must yet pass through a deep scene of affliction, before he obtains that glory for which he was destined. God often blasts those designs that are formed for the good of his people, not because he frowns upon them, but because the whole work is not yet accomplished which he intends to accomplish by their afflictions. They must pass from one trouble to another, that they may be made meet for those honors and felicities that God has in

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child <sup>d</sup> is not : and I, whither shall I go ?

31 And they took <sup>e</sup> Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood :

32 And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to <sup>d</sup> ch. 42. 13, 36. Jer. 31. 15. <sup>e</sup> ver. 23.

store for them.—¶ *And he rent his clothes.* As Reuben appears to have loved and sincerely pitied the child, it was natural that he should mourn bitterly on finding his plan defeated. Joseph, he thinks, is now lost to his father forever, and he pictures to himself the anguish of that new affliction which threatened to fall upon the good old man after the severe griefs which he had already sustained from his own misbehavior and that of his brethren. He pours out his bitter complaints to his hard-hearted brethren, but to little purpose. They could not well undo what was done, nor had they any wish to undo it. At another time Reuben will be better heard by them, when their consciences are awakened to take a just and painful review of their conduct, Gen. 42. 22.

31, 32. *And they took Joseph's coat, &c.* Though they feel not for Joseph nor for Reuben, yet they have some concern for themselves. They know that they must again meet their father, and to him some reason must be assigned for the non-appearance of his beloved son. If the truth be told, how can they escape his resentment ? They therefore make lie <sup>h</sup> their refuge. They dip the variegated coat in the blood of a kid, and, as if not daring themselves to witness the effect upon their father's breaking heart, send it to him with the message, 'Know now whether this be thy son's coat or no.' They pretended not to know with certainty what they knew too well, and insult their father with a question which one would almost

their father ; and said, This have we found ; know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

33 And he knew it, and said, *It is my son's coat ; an <sup>f</sup> evil beast hath devoured him : Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.*

<sup>f</sup> ver. 20. ch. 44. 28.

think was designed to upbraid him with the envied mark of his partiality to Joseph.—¶ *And they brought it.* That is, not the sons themselves in their own persons, for it is said that they 'sent' it ; but it was carried by their agents, as men are said to do that which they procure or order to be done.

33. *And he knew it, and said, &c.* How exquisitely cruel the conduct of these men to their venerable father, who loved them so much better than they deserved ! With what anguish did they rend his soul ! He knew too well the coat of his beloved boy, and the conclusion to which he came was the most natural that could be. There appeared to be no reason for calling it in question. It would have been a flagrant breach of charity to suspect the truth, while there was no evidence on which suspicion could rest. He can only sit down under the overwhelming conviction that his dear child has been torn to pieces by ravenous wild beasts ! What were all his former afflictions compared with this ? *They were* griefs that admitted of consolation. They were more directly from the hand of God ; they were in the course of nature ; they might be cured or endured. But this wound was mortal. It defied medicine ; it refused assuaging ; it mocked at length of time. He would be continually prompted to say with Reuben, 'The child is not ; and I, whither shall I go ?' In view of such accumulated misery rending the heart of the father, we cannot but feel that it was a gracious Providence which had previously taken

34 And Jacob <sup>ε</sup> rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters <sup>h</sup> rose up to comfort him ;

<sup>ε</sup> ver. 29. 2 Sam. 3. 31. <sup>h</sup> 2 Sam. 12. 17.

away the mother from the evil to come. The sight of Joseph's vesture dipped in blood, if it had not proved at once fatal, would at least have been attended with pangs more agonizing than those which had ushered him into life. *Our sympathy*, indeed, in reading the story, is relieved of its pungency by knowing that Jacob's sorrows were founded on a mistake, as he himself afterwards learned ; and the incident may serve to show that the sorest griefs of God's people, often have no other than imaginary grounds. But they are no less wisely or kindly ordered on this account. The present concealment of many things contributes not a little to the augmentation of future joys.—¶ *Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.* The original here is very energetic, and may be literally rendered 'rent, rent in pieces is Joseph.'

34. *Rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins.* These were among the well-known modes of expressing grief among the ancient orientals. The 'sackcloth' was a coarse rough garment, made sometimes of camels' hair, Rev. 6. 12 ; and from its being said to have been 'put on the loins,' it was probably worn inwardly, next the skin, both as a sign and an instrument of humiliation. It was made in the form of a sack with arm-holes. After every allowance on the score of his poignant sorrow, we cannot still avoid the impression that Jacob, on this occasion, scarcely behaved like himself. Although he had borne many afflictions of the most grievous kind with unshaken fortitude, yet he is here quite unmanned, and mourns for Joseph almost like one that had no hope. He speaks of going to the grave mourning and weeping through

but he refused to be comforted ; and he said, For <sup>i</sup> I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

<sup>i</sup> ch. 42. 38. & 44. 29, 31.

the whole remainder of his life. Eminent saints may be sometimes overwhelmed with sorrow, but they do not demean themselves like saints when they speak of their afflictions as if they were insupportable. God had before this dispelled many dark clouds from Jacob's horizon, and he ought not to have given way to such deep despondency now. But we would not sit in severe judgment upon the deportment of a father, whose heart was crushed by such a blow as had now fallen upon Jacob. We are yet in the flesh, and know not what infirmities we should betray were the hand of God laid thus heavily upon us.—¶ *Mourned for his son many days.* It was not till twenty-two years after this that Jacob heard of Joseph's being alive ; and though it cannot be supposed that he was equally afflicted during that whole period, yet the whole of it might be termed a mourning period ; and nothing can show more clearly the hard-hearted cruelty of his sons, than the fact of their so long withholding from him the truth, when their concealment of it was the occasion of so much mental suffering.

35. *All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him.* That is, undertook to comfort him ; engaged in the work of consolation. \* See Note on the phrase 'to rise up,' Gen. 22. 3. The phraseology implies that a *special effort* was made on the part of his family to dispel the gloom which had settled on his spirits and probably threatened his life. It is an indirect but very expressive mode of suggesting to us the greatness of his sorrow. As he had but one daughter (Dinah), by the term 'daugh-

36 And \* the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

\* ch. 39. 1.

ters' here must be understood his daughters-in-law, together with his granddaughters, if he had any. Jacob's sons acted very hypocritically when they endeavored to comfort him. They were themselves the wild beasts that had devoured Joseph. Had they been sincere, they would have confessed the truth, and tried every possible means to find out their brother, that they might redeem him from slavery. As it was, he refused to be comforted. He did not know what they had done against Joseph, but he was not ignorant of their ill-will towards him; and this probably was a chief reason why he turned a deaf ear to all that they could say for his comfort. We may suppose too that he was the more inconsolable from thinking that he had reason to reflect with remorse upon himself for sending him away without attendants to travel where he would be exposed to wild beasts.—¶ *I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.* Heb. שְׁאֵלָה *sheolah*, to *Sheol*; i. e. to the state of the dead, to the invisible world. Gr. ᾠδης, *Hades*. Vulg. *Infernum*, *hell*. The word in the original is entirely different from that usually rendered *grave*, which is קֶבֶר *keber*. Here the Heb. is שְׁאֵלָה *sheol*, from שָׁאַל *shaal*, to *ask*, having the import of *craving*, *requiring*, *insatiably longing*, from its being one of the four things which Solomon says are never satisfied, Prov. 30. 15, 16. Though sometimes translated 'grave,' sometimes 'pit,' and sometimes 'hell,' still it legitimately denotes the *state of the dead in general*, without implying either the place of torment or the place of bliss. Jacob surely did not suppose that Joseph had gone to the abodes of wo, nor did he expect to follow him thither.—Jacob renounced the hope of seeing any more good in this world, when his choicest

comfort in life was taken away. He had the prospect of no days of gladness, when Joseph, the joy of his heart, was torn in pieces by wild beasts. But he did not know what joys were yet before him in the recovery of his long-lost son. We know not what joys or what sorrows are before us in the coming periods of our existence. It is rash, therefore, to prejudge the allotments of Providence, to infer the permanence of what we now feel. At any rate, we have no reason to despond while God's throne continues firm and stable in heaven.

36. *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt.* Heb. הַמִּדְיָנִים *hammedanim*, the *Medanites*. These were the descendants of Medan, the son of Abraham, Gen. 25. 2. Both these and the Midianites seem to have lived intermingled with the Ishmaelites, by which general name they are called, v. 25.—Little did the Egyptians dream that their future lord was come to be sold in their country, when the Midianites brought down Joseph to be exposed to sale. Still less did they know the dignity and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was brought into their country by another Joseph, and by Mary his wife. Time brings the real characters and dignity of some men to light. There are still more whose real glory will remain unknown till the last day.—¶ *Unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's.* Heb. סָרִיס *sisar*, an *eunuch*. But as he had a wife, the literal sense can hardly hold in this instance. The reason of this application in the passage before us is probably to be traced to the fact that the word diverged from its original import of *keeper of the harem*, and came gradually to denote *officers*, or *court-ministers* in general.—¶ *Captain of the guard.* Heb. שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים *sar hattabbahim*, *prince of the*

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

AND it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down

from his brethren, and \* turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

\* ch. 19. 3. 2 Kings 4. 8.

*slaughter-men or executioners.* The nature of the office designated by this term is not very obvious. By some it is taken as equivalent to captain of the body-guard, or palace-guard of the king, who were always ready to execute his orders upon rebels or other malefactors, upon whom the royal indignation might fall. Such a guard is always in attendance upon oriental monarchs, and the head of them might very properly be styled the 'prince of the executioners.' By others a hint is taken from the Gr. which renders it *αρχιμαγειρος*, *chief cook*; and the original supposed to mean either one that had charge of the king's table, or the president of the sacrifices. But whatever his office was, he now became the master of one who was one day to become his lord. What Joseph now thought of his dreams, it is impossible to say; but certainly he was under a great temptation to think that the word of the Lord had failed forevermore. Yet it is wrong to judge of God's word by his providence; let us rather judge of his providence by his word. We must not think that the promise of a crown of glory is made void because we are at present subjected to the cross. Many promises have seemed to be forgotten by the promiser, and yet have been exactly fulfilled in their season.

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

The story of Joseph is interrupted at this point for the purpose of introducing some particulars in the family history of Judah, which are mainly important as having a bearing on the genealogy of our Lord. The Saviour was to derive his origin from the tribe of Judah, and the spirit of inspiration sees fit to afford us the means of most exactly authenticating his human extraction, even though some

links in the chain were far from being of a reputable character. But we learn from this that Christ derives all his glory from himself and not from his ancestry, and that his condescension is the more to be admired, the lower he descended in the scale of worldly honor in taking our nature upon him.

1. *It came to pass at that time.* That is, not at or about the time of Joseph's being sold into Egypt, but, in a larger sense, in the interval between Jacob's return from Mesopotamia and the events recorded in the foregoing chapter. For it appears, on examining the age of Joseph, as shown in different passages of the history, that he was about thirty-nine years old when Jacob and his family went down into Egypt. And it is stated, Gen. 40. 8, 12, that Pharez, the son of Judah, whose birth is mentioned at the end of this chapter, had at that time two sons born to him, Hezron and Hamul. But as Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt, this leaves only the space of twenty-two years for Judah to beget three sons, to have them grow up and be married, and their wife Tamar to have sons and grandsons. This period is evidently too short for the occurrence of all these events, and we are therefore necessitated to refer the commencement of them at least as far back as to about the time of Jacob's coming to Shechem, Gen. 33. 18.; but the incidents are related here, because there was no more convenient place for them. In like manner, according to Aben-Ezra, the phrase 'at that time,' Deut. 10. 8, is used in the same large and indefinite sense; for the historian having mentioned, v. 7, that they came to Gudgodah, goes on to say that 'at that time the Lord separated the tribe of Lev to

2 And Judah <sup>b</sup> saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name *was* <sup>c</sup> Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

3 And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name <sup>d</sup> Er.

4 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name <sup>e</sup> Onan.

5 And she yet again conceived and bare a son; and called his name

<sup>b</sup> ch. 34. 2. <sup>c</sup> 1 Chron. 2. 3. <sup>d</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 19. <sup>e</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 19.

bear the ark of the covenant,' whereas it appears elsewhere that this separation took place on the second year from their coming out of Egypt, which was forty years before their arrival at Gudsadah. Le Clerc also remarks that several instances occur in the New Testament where the phrases 'then'—'in those days'—'at that time'—must be taken with very considerable latitude of meaning. Apparent difficulties and discrepancies of this nature arise of necessity from the very structure of the Mosaic books, which are by no means a systematically connected history of the world, from the creation to the times of Moses himself; but rather a series of detached accounts, with one grand bond of connexion running through them all, viz. their relation to the chosen seed and the promised Messiah. Whatever is written we may assure ourselves is true, and might no doubt be shown to be perfectly consistent, were we sufficiently acquainted with all the circumstances.—¶ *Judah went down from his brethren, &c.* Here was the beginning of evil. Whatever were his motives, he now leaves a family and a spot where the true God was known and honored, and wandering towards the south, enters the house of a native Canaanite, with whom he forms an intimate acquaintance. And not content with sojourning amongst idolaters, he must needs marry into one of their families. Through

<sup>f</sup> Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

6 And Judah <sup>g</sup> took a wife for Er his first-born, whose name *was* Tamar.

7 And <sup>h</sup> Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of <sup>i</sup> the LORD; <sup>j</sup> and the LORD slew him.

8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto <sup>k</sup> thy brother's wife, and

<sup>f</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 20. <sup>g</sup> ch. 21. 21. <sup>h</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 19. <sup>i</sup> 1 Chron. 2. 3. <sup>j</sup> Deut. 25. 5. Matt. 23. 24.

he had joined in objecting to his sister's marriage with Shechem, yet he makes no scruple of taking this Canaanitish woman to be his wife; and that without at all consulting his father. In all this his conduct to human view was that of one who, weary of the restraints of religion, had yielded himself too much to the control of his evil propensities. His children were such as might be expected from such a parentage.

5. *And he was at Chezib when she bare him.* Called also Achzib, Josh. 15. 44, a place that fell to the tribe of Judah. Gr. *Χασβι*, *Chasbi*. The original *כֶּזֶב* *kezib*, comes from the root *כָּזַב* *kazab*, to lie, whence the prophet Micah, ch. 1. 14, by a play upon words alludes to it thus, 'The houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the Kings of Israel. (Heb. *אֶכְזִיב לְאֶחָזֵב* *akzib leakzob*).'

7. *And the Lord slew him.* It is clear that he was cut off by some special stroke of divine judgment on account of his high-handed wickedness. The language is not usually applied even to those who die by sudden death in the prime of their days. The character given of Er fixes upon him the brand of some enormous guilt, the punishment of which was to be read in the manner of his death. He was too wicked to live; and God took the work of vengeance immediately into his own hand.

8. *Marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.* That is, raise up offspring. The



marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be <sup>1</sup> his : and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

10 And the thing which he did

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 25. 6.

original word for marry (יבם *yabben*) is not the ordinary Heb. term, used to signify the forming of the marriage connexion. It is a term of restricted import, being applied exclusively to *marriage with a brother's widow*. It is a denominative verb from the noun יבם *yabam*, husband's brother, corresponding with which we have יבמת *yebemeth*, brother's wife. The requisition of Judah here is remarkable, as affording us the earliest trace of the singular law afterwards incorporated into the Jewish code, and frequently termed by modern writers the *Levirate-law*, from the word *Levir*, which, though it appears not in the ancient classic authors, but only in the Vulgate and the Pandects, is really an old Latin word, and is explained by Festus to signify a husband's brother. By this law, which is expressly given, Deut. 25. 5, when a man died without issue, his brother was obliged to marry the widow he had left, and that with the express view, that the first son produced from such marriage should be ascribed, not to the natural father, but to his deceased brother, and become his heir. In every other case marriages of this description were absolutely forbidden. See Note on Ruth, 4. 10. A further account of the Levirate-law may be seen in Michaelis' Comment. on Laws of Moses, vol. 2. p. 21—23.

9, 10. *It came to pass when he went in, &c.* The motive of Onan's perverse conduct is clearly intimated in the first

displeased the LORD : wherefore he slew <sup>m</sup> him also.

11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, <sup>n</sup> Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown ; (for he said, Lest peradventure he die also as his brethren *did*) : and Tamar went and dwelt <sup>o</sup> in her father's house.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 19. <sup>n</sup> Ruth, 1. 13. <sup>o</sup> Lev. 22. 13.

clause of the verse. He was actuated by a fixed and apparently a malignant opposition both to his brother's interests, and his father's will. Although fully aware of the strong instinctive desire in the hearts of all men to have their name and their lineage preserved when they are no more, yet he sets himself with unfeeling pertinacity against the common usage, which, in the defect of one's own issue, provided for such an exigency. Suppose that his lot and that of his brother had been reversed—that he had died and Er survived—would he not have accounted it a favor to have his line perpetuated in this way by the substituted seed of his brother? Viewed in this light, how ungenerous, invidious, and mean does his conduct appear? Such a conduct, moreover, in the present instance was peculiarly aggravated from the fact, that the Messiah was to descend from the stock of Judah, and for aught he knew, from himself, as we know he certainly did from this very Tamar, Mat. 1. 3. Was it not then doing despite to the covenant-promise thus to crush in embryo the most sacred hopes of the world? Did he not act an impious as well as unbrotherly part? Can we wonder, therefore, that 'the thing which he did displeased the Lord,' so that 'he slew him also'?

11. *Then said Judah to Tamar, &c.* This injunction would seem to intimate that Tamar was not to consider herself free to marry into another family, so

12 ¶ And in process of time, the daughter of Shuah, Judah's wife died: and Judah <sup>p</sup> was comforted, and went up unto his sheep-shearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father-in-law goeth up <sup>s</sup> to Timnath, to shear his sheep.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Sam. 13. 39. <sup>s</sup> Josh. 15. 10, 57. Judg. 14. 1.

long as Judah saw fit to retain her under his control, which he here did with the promise of bestowing her in due time upon his youngest son. In this he was probably sincere; for we have no evidence that he did not *intend* to give her in marriage according to his word. But he delayed the solemnization of it apparently from the vague apprehension of some strange fatality attending the conjugal bed of his daughter-in-law, against which his son could better guard when he became fully grown. In this he was evidently mistaken, imputing to an innocent woman a calamity which had befallen him solely on account of the flagrant wickedness of his children. His delay, however, proved too severe a trial to Tamar's patience, and she was prompted to resort to the stratagem related, v. 12—23. However culpable this expedient may be deemed when viewed by the light of the Gospel, it is probable that according to the notions and manners of the age, she considered herself justified in doing as she did. Judah's conduct does not admit of the same palliation; for in vv. 23, 26, he acknowledges it to have been morally wrong.

12. *And in process of time.* Heb. וַיִּרְבּוּ הַיָּמִים *va-yirbu hayamim*, and the days were multiplied. Meaning probably that several years had elapsed. See Note on Gen. 4. 3.—¶ *Was comforted.* That is, had passed through the usual ceremonies of mourning, and become restored to his ordinary state of mind.

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14 And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and <sup>s</sup> sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath: for she saw <sup>t</sup> that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

<sup>s</sup> Prov. 7. 12. <sup>t</sup> ver. 11, 26.

—¶ *He and his friend Hirah.* As the season of sheep-shearing among the Israelites was one of great festivity, it seems to have been customary for them to invite their friends to be present on the occasion. Thus, 2 Sam. 13. 23, 'And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim; and Absalom invited all the king's sons.' Timnath was a city in the tribe of Judah, Josh. 15. 57, not far from the sea, nor far from Adullam. It was for a long time in possession of the Philistines.

14. *Covered her with a veil.* As we have no historical documents, except the present, extending back to this ancient period, we know not how far the incidents here mentioned were common in those days. But thus much it seems fair to infer from what is here said; that there were public women of this description; that they generally veiled themselves; sat in public places by the highway side; and received a certain hire.—¶ *Sat in an open place.* Heb. בִּפְתַח עֵינַיִם *bephe-thah enayim*, at the opening, or door of the eyes, or of the two fountains. A very obscure expression, and variously rendered in the old versions. (1.) The Gr. takes the last word as a proper name, and gives πρὸς ταῖς πύλαις Αἰναν, at the gates of Enan. This is approved by Le Clerc, who thinks she sat at the gate of a little town called *Enayim* from two fountains that happened to be near. This opinion is favored also by Gesenius. (2.) Others take the phrase to

15 When Judah saw her, he thought her *to be* a harlot; because she had covered her face.

16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she *was* his daughter-in-law;) and she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

17 And he said, "I will send *thee* a kid from the flock: and she said, "Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send *it*?

18 And he said, What pledges shall I give thee? And she said, \* Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thy hand: and he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

α Ezek. 16. 33.    ▼ ver. 20.    ✕ ver. 25.

signify literally *the opening of the eyes*, and to indicate a place *conspicuous to the eyes* of all that passed by, or one of large prospect, commanding an extensive view on every side. (3.) Several of the Jewish interpreters understand it of a *place where two ways meet*, where the traveller had to turn his eyes in two directions in order to determine which to choose. But the Hebrew generally terms such a place *the mother of the way*, or *the beginning of two ways*, as Ezek. 21. 24, upon which see the commentators. (4.) Rosenmuller gives the preference to a fourth rendering, viz. *the opening of two fountains*, i. e. a place where two fountains burst forth. But as it is by no means clear that the Heb. word for *opening* ever signifies *issuing*, we are compelled to regard this construction as doubtful as any of the rest, and to say of the whole that they are unsatisfactory. It is happily one of those critical points of minor moment which we can afford to leave unsolved.

15-22. *When Judah saw her, &c.* The narrative reflects greatly on the character of Judah, in whom it might

19 And she arose and went away and *ν* laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widow-hood.

20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot that *was* openly by the way-side? And they said, There was no harlot in this *place*.

22 And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, *that* there was no harlot in this *place*.

23 And Judah said, Let her take *it* to her, lest we be shamed: be-

γ ver. 14.

have been expected that the memory of the past, if not a more advanced age, would have cooled or extinguished the fires of unholy passion. On the contrary, it would seem that he was transported beyond the bounds, not of reason and religion only, but even of sense; for he evidently did not recognise the voice of Tamar, though he must have been familiar with her for years. No doubt God had suffered him to fall under somewhat of a judicial infatuation, as a punishment of his perverseness; for how else should he have been so precipitate as to give into the hands of a strange woman a pledge for the kid, which she would naturally consider far more valuable than the kid itself, and therefore be very certain to retain? 'He appears,' says Calvin, sternly, 'to have been deprived of all discretion; nor are these facts recorded by Moses to any other end than to show us how the just judgment of heaven had darkened the mind of this miserable man, who by heaping sins upon sins, had quenched the light of the Spirit.'

23 *Let her take it to her, lest we be*

hold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

24 ¶ And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-

in-law hath <sup>a</sup> played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, <sup>a</sup> and let her be burnt.

<sup>a</sup> Judg. 19. 2.    <sup>a</sup> Lev. 21. 9.    Deut. 22. 21.

*shamed.* Heb. פן נהיה לבוז *pen nihyeh labuz*, lest we be for a contempt. The meaning is, let her take or keep the pledge to herself; let us give ourselves no farther concern about it. I have acted up to my agreement by sending the kid, but as she is not to be found, it will be better to hush up the affair entirely, as otherwise we shall expose ourselves to scorn and derision for being outwitted and deceived by a harlot. He had rather lose the bracelets and the signet than run the risk, by making much ado about it, of blazening abroad his own scandal. 'Judah now fears lest he shall be beaten with his own staff, lest his signet shall be used to seal his reproach; resolving not to know them, and wishing they were unknown of others. Nature is not more forward to commit sin, than willing to hide it.' *Bp. Hall.* This fear of shame, this anxious wish to guard against publicity being given to a vile act, shows that God has infixed in the minds of men an instinctive condemnation of it, a sentiment which must have violence done to it before the deed can be perpetrated.

24. *Let her be burnt.* It is to be borne in mind that the crime for which Tamar was adjudged to this severe punishment, was not fornication, but *adultery*; she being considered the wife of Shelah, though the marriage had not yet taken full effect. Except in the case of a priest's daughter who was to be burnt, Lev. 21. 9, the usual punishment under the Law of this crime was stoning, Deut. 22. 23, 24. As the former law could not apply to Tamar, Michaelis supposes that the sentence here passed upon her by Judah is to be understood of posthumous burning—that she was first to be

stoned to death and then burnt. This idea he thinks strongly supported by what is related of the fate of Achan, Josh. 7. 15 and 25, as also by the drift of John, 8. 5—7, when the Jews say of the woman taken in adultery, that 'Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned;' and our Saviour himself recognising that mode of punishment says, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' From this it would seem that *stoning* and not *burning*, was the ordinary practice of the Jews in such cases in our Saviour's time. Yet in the present instance the language of the text is so explicit and unqualified, that we do not feel it safe to depart from it, especially as we find the punishment of burning inflicted upon the wife of Samson, Judg. 15. 6, who had married another man, and learn, moreover, Jer. 29. 22, 23, that the King of Babylon roasted two Jews in the fire for committing adultery. These, it is true, were not Jewish instances, but they show that that punishment for that crime prevailed more or less among other nations, and the probability, therefore, is, that it obtained among the chosen people also. In later times, in Europe, the punishment of burning has been mostly confined to offences of a *religious* character, particularly heresy. But it is now almost every where disused, having been banished by the more humane and merciful codes which have sprung up under the *genuine* influences of Christianity. The question has been asked, how Judah came to possess the power which is implied in his passing such a sentence upon his daughter-in-law? Were parents, in the patriarchal times, invested with the

25 When she *was* brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man whose these *are*, *am* I with child: and she said, <sup>b</sup> Discern, I pray thee, whose *are* these, <sup>c</sup> the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 37. 22.      <sup>c</sup> ver. 18.

power of life and death over their families? To this we answer, that although there is no doubt that fathers in the East have always governed their women, children, and slaves with a far more despotic authority than is usual in the West, yet we are not probably to understand Judah's words in the text as implying any thing more than that he *consented that the ordinary law in such cases should go into effect*. As he was dwelling among the Canaanites merely as a sojourner, we can scarcely conceive him to be here speaking in a judicial or magisterial character, but as a private citizen, simply saying that he not only had nothing to object to her being dealt with after the usual manner, but that as a friend of good order in society, he could not but approve of it. No doubt there were then public courts and tribunals before which such cases were tried, and when Judah says, 'Bring her forth, &c.' it is equivalent to expressing his willingness that she should, like other criminals, be arraigned and punished according to her deserts. Yet, as not unfrequently happens, in thus consenting to the sentence passed upon her, he was really condemning himself.

25. *By the man whose these are, &c.* It is obvious that Tamar might before this have exposed Judah, had she been so inclined. But she defers it, probably under a secret prompting of the Spirit of God, till matters come to a crisis when she can make the disclosure to the most effect. In this, however, it does not appear that she was influenced by vindictive feelings towards Judah, or that she had any wish to hold him up to public abhorrence, but simply to vindicate her

26 And Judah <sup>d</sup> acknowledged *them*, and said, <sup>e</sup> She hath been more righteous than I; because that <sup>f</sup> I gave her not to Shelah my son: and he knew her again <sup>g</sup> no more.

27 ¶ And it came to pass in the

<sup>d</sup> ch. 37. 33.      <sup>e</sup> 1 Sam. 24. 17.      <sup>f</sup> ver. 14.  
<sup>g</sup> Job. 34. 31, 32.

own conduct; while God, in the mean time, was carrying on his purpose to bring the offender, by this means, to a penitent confession of his fault. In fact, Tamar appears to have managed the affair with great delicacy. Instead of boldly summoning him into her presence, and requiring of him to stand forth as her accuser before the judges, she does not even name him, nor seek an interview, but sends to him the pledged articles, leaving it to his own conscience to rebuke him before God. It is well when injured innocence can rest satisfied with the vindication of itself, without *pursuing* the offending party to the extreme point of justice or revenge. In many cases much may be left to the inward self-inflicted corrections of an ingenuous mind.

26. *Judah acknowledged them, and said, &c.* Heb. יָכַר *yakker*, *knew, discerned, recognised*; the same word in the original with that which occurs above, v. 25, and is rendered 'discern.'

—¶ *She hath been more righteous than I.* That is, less culpable. The conduct of neither had much to commend it, on the score of *righteousness*, nor does he perhaps intend to say that she had in *this matter* committed a less sin than himself, but that *his wrong-doing in another instance had been the occasion of hers, at this time*. This fact gave her the advantage; it attached more blame to his conduct, in common estimation, however it might be in the sight of God, than to hers. He had broken his word to her, but she had kept her faith with him, living patiently in a state of widowhood, year after year, till she saw no prospect of her hopes being realised. 'God will

time of her travail, that behold, twins *were* in her womb.

28 And it came to pass when she travailed, that *the one* put out *his* hand; and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first.

find a time to bring his children on their knees, and to wring from them penitent confessions; and rather than he will not have them soundly ashamed, he will make them the trumpets of their own reproach.' *Bp. Hall.*—¶ *He knew her again no more.* This seems to be inserted as a sort of seal and assurance of the sincerity of Judah's repentance. A genuine sorrow for sin is inconsistent with again relapsing into it.

28. *And it came to pass when she travailed, &c.* The circumstance here mentioned is extraordinary, and shows her parturition to have been hard and perilous. But it is not, perhaps, a matter of surprise, that in the righteous providence of God she should have been thus chastened for her waywardness; that a sinful conception should be followed by a bitter travail.—¶ *The midwife took and bound, &c.* This was done to distinguish the first-born, as many important privileges belonged to primogeniture. The word here rendered 'scarlet,' (שָׁנִי *shani*), signifies a worm-color, coming from an excrescence made in a kind of oak, by a fly, as the common galls are produced. The color was a beautiful crimson, and retained its lustre for ages.

29. *How hast thou broken forth? &c.* Heb. בָּחַ פָּרֵצַת *mah paratzta*. Whether these are to be understood as the words of Tamar or the midwife is not clear. They seem to be an exclamation of wonder that when Zarah was apparently upon the point of being born first, Pharez had, as it were, forced his way through his brother, as if he had broken through an intervening wall,

29 And it came to pass as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out; and she said, How hast thou broken forth? *this* breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called <sup>h</sup> Pharez.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 46. 12. Numb. 26. 20. 1 Chron. 2. 4. Matt. 1. 3.

and preceded him in birth. It plainly denotes something extraordinary in the manner of his emerging into life, and from the renderings of the ancient versions it would seem that the circumstance was considered like Jacob's taking Esau by the heel, as portending something important in his future fortunes. Gr. 'Why is the partition divided for thee?' Chal. 'What great strength was in thee that thou hast prevailed?' Targ. Jon. 'With how great strength hast thou prevailed!—and thine it is to prevail, for it shall come to pass that thou shalt possess the kingdoms.' Arab. 'How hast thou prevailed!—thy strength is upon thee.' These versions no doubt recognise a mystical import in the words, as pointing mainly perhaps to David and the Messiah, who both descended in a direct line from Pharez.—¶ *This breach be upon thee.* Heb. עָלֶיךָ פָּרֵץ *aleka paretz*. That is, the breach is thine; thou hast made it; and thou shalt carry the memorial of it upon thee. By *breach* or *eruption* has thy birth been marked; *breach* or *eruption* shall be thy name. At the same time it may be remarked, that if the sense of *prevalence* be rightly attributed to the root in the former clause, it may also be retained here, and then the words may be understood as a prophetic announcement, that *the pre-eminence, the ascendancy*, or in other words, the chief distinction of the birthright, should pertain to Pharez over his brother. Accordingly, the Jewish writers say, 'In Pharez the strength of David's house was portended; and therefore from him proceedeth the kingdom of the house of David.' See

30 And afterward came out his brother that had the scarlet thread upon his hand; and his name was called Zarah.

#### CHAP. XXXIX.

AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt: and <sup>a</sup> Potiphar, an

<sup>a</sup> ch. 37. 36. Ps. 105. 17.

Ainsworth in loc. This interpretation affords a reason for the particular mention of an incident which otherwise we should scarcely have thought worthy of a place in the sacred record.

#### CHAP. XXXIX.

THE sacred writer now resumes the suspended history of Joseph, and it would seem as if the leading event of this chapter, viz. the signal triumph of Joseph's virtue, were designed to be set in contrast with the opposite weakness of his brother Judah, detailed in all its humiliating particulars in the preceding. Of the various incidents of his lot in Egypt prior to his temptation, little is said, and nothing at all of the grief of mind which he undoubtedly felt, both on his own and his father's account. The thoughts of the distress which his mysterious absence must have occasioned to the heart of his doting father, no doubt constituted one of the sharpest pangs that pierced his own. But apart from this, his affliction was very severe. A youth of seventeen, accustomed to every indulgence, suddenly torn away from his paternal home, enslaved to all appearance for life, and that among a nation of idolaters wholly ignorant of the God of his fathers—what allotment can we conceive more bitter and trying to the spirit of an affectionate and pious child like Joseph! Yet from all that can be inferred from his history, he bore his sufferings with the most exemplary meekness, presenting at this time

officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, <sup>b</sup> bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And <sup>c</sup> the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man: and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 37. 28. <sup>c</sup> ver. 21. ch. 21. 22. & 26. 24, 28. & 28. 15. 1 Sam. 16. 18. & 18. 14, 28. Acts 7. 9.

the spectacle of a mind unsubdued by the deepest distress, as he afterwards did of one uncorrupted by the highest elevation. In humble submission to the will of God and the calm of an unruffled conscience, he found a balm for the wound of the arrows with which the cruel archers so sorely grieved him.

1. *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt.* Heb. <sup>דורדור</sup> *hurad*, was made to descend. For the reason of this peculiar diction in reference to a journey to Egypt, see Note on Gen. 12. 10. In order to view aright a dispensation of Providence which involved the selling and removal of Joseph, as if he had been a beast or a captive taken in war, we must advert to his own interpretation of the affair at a subsequent period, Gen. 45. 5, 7, 'Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither—for God sent me before you to preserve to you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.' All the ways of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and his eyes are upon his people for good at the very times when they seem to be forgotten.

2. *And the Lord was with Joseph, &c.* Chal. 'The Word of the Lord was his help.' From this source he had an infallible security of happiness. Though withdrawn from under the shadow of a fond father's wing, though a stranger in a strange land, and subject to the caprice of a heathen master, yet he was blessed. How could it be otherwise,

3 And his master saw that the LORD <sup>d</sup> was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

<sup>d</sup> Ps. 1. 3

when 'the Lord was with him?'—when he enjoyed the presence, the protection, the favor of the Lord Almighty? We are too ready, when met by adverse events, or when not speedily delivered from our afflictions, to doubt of God's favor; as if outward prosperity were a sign of his love, and adversity a sure sign of his hatred. But how clear is the Scripture declaration, that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.' God could easily have restored Joseph at once to his father's bosom, yet he did it not, but left him many years in a state of slavery, where 'the iron entered his soul.' Let us cease then to judge of his ways by ours. Though all his dispensations towards his people are prompted by infinite love, yet his love does not show itself in the way of the weak, fond favoritism of many earthly parents, who spare their children the present smart, even at the expense of the future joy. Joseph might have been raised at once to all the dignity which he afterwards possessed, but where then would have been the precious fruits of meekness and continence, of wisdom and patience, which were maturing under his unparalleled trials?—

¶ And he was a prosperous man. Heb.

אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ *ish matzliach*, a man causing to prosper. This may be understood actively, viz. that Joseph was a man making Potiphar's house to prosper, and this is perhaps more in accordance with the ordinary usage of the word. See my Note on Ps. 1. 3. Yet it will admit of the sense ordinarily put upon it, that the Lord made Joseph to succeed and prosper in all his undertakings, so that he soon obtained the esteem, the love, and the confidence of his master. Prosperity is not always a sign of God's special favor, yet his hand is always to be

recognised in it by his people, upon whom he confers it when he sees it would be better for them than adversity, or when, by means of it, he purposes to make them blessings to others. From Joseph's prosperity we draw one very interesting inference, viz. that he submitted himself *cheerfully* to his lot; that he studied to make himself not only useful, but agreeable to his master; that instead of sinking into a torpid melancholy under his sudden change of condition, he applied himself with alacrity and spirit to the discharge of his duties, as a diligent servant; for in no other way would it seem possible for him to have commended himself so effectually to the good graces of Potiphar. No doubt in all this the joy of the Lord was his strength. He saw the love of God mitigating and sweetening his sorrows, and the more clearly we can discern the same love ruling in the events of our lives, the greater pleasure shall we take in the discharge of our duties.

—¶ And he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. That is, he patiently continued in the house, or family, faithfully discharging the duties of a household servant, without attempting to escape, distinctly recognising the hand of providence in his present lot.

3. And his master saw that the Lord was with him. The prosperity of Joseph was manifest. The blessing of God upon his labors was so conspicuous, that his master himself observed and acknowledged it. It is not probably to be understood that Potiphar knew God by the name of 'Jehovah,' or called him so. But he saw that Joseph was the object of supernatural care and favor; and this Moses, and not Potiphar, ascribes to its true source. He prospered because Jehovah, and not any imaginary deity, blessed him. This is a cir-



4 And Joseph \*found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him †overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the

\* ch. 18. 3. & 19. 19. ver. 21. † Gen. 24. 2.

cumstance not a little to Joseph's credit, inasmuch as it implies that he made no secret of his religion. Had he dissembled on this score, had he disguised his real faith, and apparently countenanced the Egyptian idolatries, he certainly could not have looked for those tokens of the divine favor which he received. We must suppose, therefore, that he firmly, though probably without ostentation, avowed himself a worshipper of Jehovah, and as his conduct in every other respect was perfectly exemplary and satisfactory to Potiphar, he made no objection to it. This affords a most encouraging example to religious servants to recommend the gospel by their fidelity and diligence. Servants, it is true, cannot *command* success and prosperity; and God does not absolutely bind himself to grant success to the best-conducted affairs. But it is undoubtedly the duty of servants to study to promote the prosperity of their masters, and to seek the divine blessing upon all the interests entrusted to them; and from the example of Joseph we learn what fruits they may expect to reap from such deportment. The circumstances are moreover an admonition to all Christians to be faithful to their heavenly Master, even when there are no religious friends about them to watch over them.

4. *And he served him, &c.* Heb. יִשְׁרַת אֹתוֹ *yeshareth otho, ministered to him*; not as a slave, but as a steward. The ensuing clause is explanatory of the phrase. He 'ministered,' by acting in the capacity of an 'overseer.' He had before served him *menially*; but this

time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that ‡ the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

‡ ch. 30. 27.

kind of service was the first step of his preferment. The Gr. has *εὐαρεστωνεν αυτω*, *he pleased him*, which lacks the requisite precision.—¶ *And he made him overseer.* Rather, 'for he made him overseer.' The words are designed to explain the manner in which he *ministered* to him. The original has here but a single word *גַּפְחִיד* *yaphkid*, signifying literally *to make to visit*; i. e. to clothe with a visitatorial or superintending power. The Gr. renders it *καταστησεν*, *constituted him over his house*, parallel to which the Evangelist says, 'Of a truth I say unto you that he will *make him ruler* (Gr. *καταστησει*, *will constitute him*) over all that he hath;' i. e. he will honor him as Potiphar did Joseph. The meaning is, that he made him his chief steward; and it is the business of a steward to have charge of a household establishment. Having been faithful over a few things, he is now made ruler over many things. Thus was God gradually fulfilling his own word, 'Them that honor me I will honor,' and at the same time bringing about his ultimate purposes of mercy to the house of Jacob.

5. *And it came to pass from the time, &c.* The blessing of heaven previous to Joseph's advancement to the stewardship had rested more especially upon himself and his doings. He had been made to prosper in a signal manner, and Potiphar was constrained to acknowledge it. But now from this time the blessing of the Lord was upon Potiphar, upon all that he had, whether in the house or the field, but still for Joseph's sake. As Potiphar had shown himself disposed to favor the Lord's

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat: and Joseph <sup>h</sup> was a goodly *person*, and well favoured.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph: and she said, <sup>i</sup> Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto

<sup>h</sup> 1 Sam. 16. 12.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Sam. 13. 11.

servant, the Lord will repay his kindness by favoring and blessing him. How desirable is it to be connected with those who are beloved of God! How highly are they to be prized, whether as servants or as friends! The kindness of the Most High towards his people overflows to all with whom they are related. Pious stewards, and pious servants of every class, are a blessing to their masters, not only because they are faithful, and manage their affairs with discretion, but because they draw down the special blessing of God upon the households to which they belong. Masters may learn likewise from this passage, what treatment is due to faithful servants. They ought to trust, to honor, and to love them. When men are precious in God's sight they are honorable, whatever be their station in life. If they are at present undervalued or despised by men, they are honored by angels; and when God, by signal proofs of his favor, makes it known that he loves them, he will make them honorable in the eyes of those who formerly despised them. Christian masters who do not honor faithful servants, do what in them lies to falsify the words of Solomon, Prov. 27. 18, 'As he who keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof, so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored.'

6. *Knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat.* Heb. כָּא יָדַע לֹא בָאֵרֶמֶה לוֹ *yada meumah lo, knew*

his master's wife, Beho'ld, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand.

9 *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: k how then can I do this great wickedness, and l-sin against God?*

<sup>k</sup> Prov. 6. 29, 32.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 20. 6. Lev. 6

2. 2 Sam. 12. 13. Ps. 51. 4.

*not any thing with him.* That is, he took no cognizance or care of any thing that was entrusted to Joseph; he required him not to render an account of his expenses or receipts; he left every thing to his exclusive management; he surrendered every thing so entirely into his hands, that he took no care for any thing but to eat and drink what was set before him. This was the highest possible expression of confidence, and how well it was bestowed is evident from the sequel.—¶ *Goodly and well-favored.* The former of these words has reference to the form or shape of the whole person, the latter to the countenance. Beauty of person and face is a quality which gains love, and ought to make the possessor of it thankful; but it easily proves a snare to the possessor himself or to others. It was Joseph's comfort that he was beloved by his master, but it was his misfortune that he was *too well* beloved by his mistress. He had an attractive countenance that she could not behold without conceiving a regard for him, which proved for a time prejudicial to Joseph, but infinitely more prejudicial to herself.

7—9. *And it came to pass after these things, &c.* A new and severe trial is now appointed for Joseph. Raised by his good conduct to a high post of honor and trust, possessing the unlimited confidence and approbation of his master, we are ready to congratulate him upon his happy lot, and could fain wish to

see him continued long and uninterruptedly in the enjoyment of it. But God only knows what degree of trouble is necessary for his people, or how long it is proper they should continue under its pressure. When we should plead for rest and peace, he often sees fit to summon us to labor and conflict; and in tracing the course of his providence, nothing is more obvious than that seasons of advancement and prosperity are usually the seasons when the most violent temptations befall his children. So it was with Joseph. From a quarter which he little expected, a storm of temptation was coming upon him which threatened to make shipwreck of all that was precious and dear to him, in time and eternity. But by the grace of God he was enabled to resist the fierce assault, and to baffle a plot against his innocence more formidable than the cruel machinations of his brethren against his life. He achieved a victory over himself, such as has seldom been witnessed in this fallen world. And nothing related of him speaks more highly for the lessons of piety and purity, of honor, integrity, and universal rectitude with which his mind had been early imbued, than his conduct on this occasion. His unprincipled mistress, lost to the modesty and every other virtue of her sex, cast an eye of unhallowed desire upon the amiable inmate of her house, and by various wanton looks and gestures signified too plainly the criminality of her intentions. It is not perhaps to be understood by the clause 'she said, &c.' that her vile solicitation was actually expressed in so many words. But this was the *language of her conduct*, and conduct in the eye of the Scriptures is virtual speech. Thus, Eccl. 10. 3, 'When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he *saieth* to every one that he is a fool;' i. e. his conduct declares him to be a fool. See Note on Gen. 15. 1. But however this may be, the narrative

is too plain to admit a doubt that her demeanor towards Joseph was marked by a most shameless effrontery. Not only was the sacredness of the marriage compact lost sight of, but all the decorous, timid reserve which distinguishes the sex, except among the most abandoned, had disappeared. Alas, how few young men would have resisted the strong temptation which Joseph was now called to encounter! How easily did his brother Judah, in a more advanced period of life, fall before a temptation, which, in the comparison, was very small! But the lure in Joseph's case was unavailing. He held fast his integrity, and would not let it go, for his heart was strongly fortified by the fear of God, and he was powerfully supported by that grace 'which is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the divine glory with exceeding joy.'—¶ *But he refused, and said, &c.* He not only refused to comply with his mistress, but gave his reasons for refusing; and these reasons were well adapted to cure her of her madness, had it not been incurable. He begins by a modest but severe remonstrance, exactly suited to his situation. Without expressly adverting to the wickedness of the tempter, or reproaching her with the indelicacy, the infidelity, and the baseness of her proposal, he confines himself to what respected *his own obligation*, and what would be *his own sin*. He alludes to the responsible station to which he had been raised by his master, and intimates that his obligation was in exact proportion to the trust reposed in him. 'He hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I.' Confidence will always beget in a well-disposed mind a disposition to repay it with fidelity; and one who betrays trust is justly regarded as a flagrant transgressor of the laws of society. Joseph displays the lofty integrity of his soul by pleading this consideration.

10 And it came to pass, as she

Men of perverse minds would have been emboldened by the very idea which exercised such a restraint upon the mind of Joseph. But not so with the noble-spirited captive in the house of Potiphar. To the glory of Joseph it is recorded that the very largeness of the trust and authority reposed in him, withheld him from the guilty abuse of it. It is obvious that he was influenced by other motives, but he dwells at greatest length upon this, because the force of it would be best understood and perhaps felt, by his mistress. How base was her conduct, when she tempted her husband's favorite servant to betray him in the most cruel manner, and to repay the greatest favors with an irreparable shame! But he pleads also the obligation arising from the generosity and kindness of his master, who had withheld nothing from him but her, and that because she was his wife. These words ought to have pierced her heart like daggers. She was his wife, and a man's wife ought to be his alone, and not another's with him. The most confidential servant, the most esteemed friend, must consider a man's wife as a sacred reservation, and regard and treat her as his exclusive treasure. The more favored they are in other respects, the more careful must they be to hold this possession inviolable. A man's wife is a part of his own flesh. To separate between one's soul and body is scarcely a greater injury than to separate between parties thus closely related. This Joseph deeply felt and strongly urged. Penetrated with a sense of the favors heaped upon him, he would not behave in a manner so unworthy of them. And if Joseph, a poor slave, had such a grateful sense of Potiphar's favors, how monstrously ungrateful was the wife of his bosom, who wished to repay his love with the blackest stain to his honor! But he rises to a consideration of still higher and holier import. 'How can I do this great wickedness,

spake to Joseph day by day, that he

and sin against God?' It will not only be treachery to my master on earth, but daring wickedness against my master in heaven. The offence against Potiphar would be very inexcusable, but it was a small thing compared with the offence which would have been given to God. God is our maker and our judge; and if honor required Joseph to be faithful to his master, much more did religion, which is a far stronger principle than honor, oblige him to be faithful to God. If gratitude bound him not to sin against the former, how much more strong ought that feeling to be towards God? If the reverence which he owed to his master's station, ought to secure *him* from insult, how much more ought the majesty of God to restrain every offence against *Him*! It is all-important that in circumstances of temptation we should fix our eye upon the *evil* to which we are tempted. If we suffer our thoughts to dwell on its agreeableness, as Eve did in regard to the forbidden fruit, its sinfulness will insensibly diminish in our sight, many specious pleas and excuses will suggest themselves, and we shall in all likelihood be carried away by it. But if we direct our view steadfastly to the holy will of God, and the strong obligations we are under to him, that which would otherwise appear a little thing will be accounted what it truly is, a *great wickedness*, and we shall revolt at the idea of sinning against God. This was the view of things which weighed with Joseph, and he therefore speaks as if it had been *impossible* for him to bring himself under the guilt of such atrocious ingratitude, injustice and impurity. He could not do it without at once divesting himself of piety as well as of humanity, and therefore his language is that of unconquerable reluctance to such baseness.

10. As she spake to Joseph day by day,

&c. Had Joseph resisted but a single

hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there* was none of the men of the house there within.

assault from this source in the manner related above, it would still have been a most signal triumph of principle over passion, of the fear of God over the promptings of evil. But it enhances greatly the merit of Joseph's constancy, that it was proof against an oft-repeated and long-continued solicitation to sin. We all know the effect of persevering importunity in any thing. We know that it is not every one who withstands a temptation in the first instance, that holds out to the end. Eve repelled the tempter on the first onset, but was carried away by the second. Samson refused for a long time to satisfy Delilah's insidious questions, but at last the mighty man was conquered by the tears and importunities of a fair woman. And thus in all ages sinners refuse for a time to comply with the great enemy of souls, but at last, tired of resistance, they yield to the destroyer, and plunge themselves in aggravated guilt and misery. But Joseph stood firm against a prolonged series of urgent temptations. None of the tempter's arts or blandishments succeeded in inducing him to swerve from his integrity; nor if she could have given him all the treasures of Egypt, as the price of his virtue, could she have accomplished her object. The inward operation of faith, love, fear, and duty were more than a match for the seductive influences which bore upon him from without. But doubtless where Joseph stood, thousands would have fallen.—¶ *He hearkened not unto her to lie by her, or to be with her.* This passage affords an instance of a very important shade of meaning being lost to the English reader, by the translators' not hav-

12 And <sup>m</sup> she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his gar-

<sup>m</sup> Prov. 7. 13, &c.

ing adverted to, perhaps not being acquainted with, the genuine force of the original. When we read that Joseph refused to hearken to his mistress's solicitations, or 'to be with her,' we naturally understand the meaning to be, that he declined being in her company, that he shunned her presence, and especially that he avoided, as much as possible, being alone with her. All this may indeed have been so; we think it very probable that it was; still this does not by any means represent the true sense of the original phrase. The 'or' is not found in the Hebrew, and its insertion in our translation prevents the precise drift of the writer from being apprehended. The true rendering results from the omission of the particle —'he hearkened not unto her to lie by her to be with her'—and the import of 'being with her' unquestionably is, being united, and as it were identified with her, so as in a sense to co-exist with her by a constructive reciprocation of being. This sense is clearly developed by the words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6. 16, 17, 'What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot *is one body?* for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord *is one spirit.*' To be with one, therefore, in this sense, is, in the eye of the Scriptures, to have a community of being. This is the nature of the conjugal union, which is trenched upon and invaded by every act of unlawful commerce, such as that meditated by Potiphar's wife.

11—13. *And it came to pass about this time, &c.* Undoubtedly in most cases it would be the duty of one circumstanced as Joseph was to seek safety by

ment in her hand, and was fled forth,

14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

flight. Some kinds of temptations are to be boldly encountered, whatever may be the result. Others are to be overcome only by removing ourselves beyond their reach. But in Joseph's case this would appear to have been impossible. He was a bought servant, however exalted, and therefore was not at liberty to leave. Nor could he speak on the subject to his master without ruining his peace forever. He, therefore, keeps the whole matter a profound secret to himself, and goes steadily forward in the discharge of his duties, inwardly leaning upon God for support in the conflict. On one occasion the business of his calling brought him alone into her presence. She suffered not the opportunity to pass neglected. She renewed her solicitations; and finding that words were vain, proceeded to further extremities. Joseph was now in a critical situation. By his superior strength or swiftness, it was indeed possible for him to escape from the presence of this wicked woman; but how will it be possible for him to escape the effects of her fierce resentment? He, however, did not at this time think of her resentment? His engrossing care is to get away from her hated presence. In so doing he left his garment in her hand. The danger incurred by this was very obvious. Her resentment might improve it as the instrument of his destruction; or if she endeavored, for her own sake, to conceal it, an accident might probably discover it, and raise very dark suspicions against him. But convinced that sin was an infinitely worse evil than disgrace or death, he is deter-

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15 And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17 And she <sup>a</sup> spake unto him ac-

<sup>a</sup> Exod. 23. 1. Ps. 120. 3.

mined to fly at all hazards. The consequences were such as might be expected from a lascivious and abandoned woman. Disappointed and defeated in her vile intentions, the demon of lust is suddenly converted into that of rage and revenge. She could not ruin Joseph's soul, but she will, if possible, ruin his body, and will spare no lies or hypocrisy to attain her purpose. Joseph himself, in his haste to escape, has furnished her with the means; and her genius is fruitful in expedients to improve them. 'This second time is Joseph stripped of his garment: before in the violence of envy, now of lust; before of necessity, now of choice; before to deceive his father, now his master; for, behold, the pledge of his fidelity, which he left in those wicked hands, is made an evidence against him of that which he refused to do. Therefore, did he leave his cloak, because he would not do that of which he is accused and condemned, because he left it. What safety is there against great adversaries, when even arguments of innocence are used to convince of evil? Lust is a desperate madness when it is opposed; no hatred burns so furiously as that which arises from the quenched coals of love.'

*Bp. Hall.*

14—17. *She called unto the men of her house, &c.* If we were amazed, in reading the foregoing narrative, to find this woman so brazen-faced, we are now astonished at her infernal artifices. She scrupled at nothing that was wicked. She not only dissembles and lies, but she plots the destruction of the best of men, for no other reason but his incom-

22

cording to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me :

18 And it came to pass as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him,

parable virtues. She first calls the servants and makes bitter complaints to them, as if her lord had intended to affront her by bringing the young Hebrew into the house. That she should express herself in language so disrespectful to her husband, half attributing the pretended insult to him, shows the estrangement of her heart from its proper object, and nothing could have tended more directly to set the servants against their master. But all manner of minor wickednesses are apt to cluster about a larger, and so it was here. From her own account, Joseph was a monster of iniquity, and herself a pattern of purity. And it must be admitted that the presumptive evidence against him was very strong, and her language was calculated to inflame their anger towards him. By employing the plural 'us'—'hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us'—she no doubt intended to represent the alleged wrong as done against the whole house, that she might enlist them more fully in her interest in seeking revenge. 'If he dare be so bold with me, what baseness and villany would he not practise against any of you?' In all this we are reminded of the inspired portraiture of a woman of this description. 'And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.'

19, 20. When his master heard the words of his wife, &c. The scheme of

saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his ° wrath was kindled.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and ° put him into the ° prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

° Prov. 6. 34. 35.    ° Ps. 105. 18.    1 Pet. 2. 19.    ° ch. 40. 3, 15. & 41. 14.

this wicked woman is permitted to succeed. By her lying speeches, by her fiendish art, she deceives her husband and draws him unwittingly into a partnership of her guilt. 'The man whom no consideration of pleasure or advantage could for a moment allure from the path of rectitude, is accused of attempting to seduce his mistress, and the accusation is believed! The story was plausible, and if Potiphar had heretofore had no reason to doubt his wife's fidelity, it is not perhaps surprising that he should have believed it; and believing it, he could not but be roused to the highest pitch of indignation on account of it. Yet, on the other hand, there were some things calculated, on closer inspection, to throw suspicion upon his wife's story. It was in itself very unlikely that Joseph should have left his garment in the hands of his mistress to be a witness against himself, if he had really insulted her. His strength was superior to hers, and he could, no doubt, have recovered the robe had he been so disposed, even against her efforts to retain it. No explanation, therefore, but the true one could *reasonably* account for the incident. But Potiphar was not in a mood to be swayed merely by what was *reasonable*. His wife's statements raised a storm of passion in his breast, which prevented him from listening to the voice of equity and truth. In all this he plainly did wrong. He paid too much deference to his wife. He ought not to have believed her words against Joseph, without investigating the affair

more thoroughly. A man ought indeed to love his wife as a part of himself, but however dear she may be to him, truth and justice ought to be still dearer. The consideration of Joseph's long and faithful services, and his unexceptionable deportment hitherto, was certainly entitled to some weight in opposition to her testimony. But to all pleas from this quarter he seems to have been entirely deaf, and accordingly, without further ceremony Joseph is immured in prison, to be dragged forth in due time to still severer punishment. Truly has the wise man said, Prov. 6. 26, that 'the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.' Joseph, in the mean time, seems meekly and silently to have submitted to his hard lot. Had he told his own story, could he have expected it to gain credit? Who would have believed that a young man could have exhibited such a rare instance of self-denial? And how could a husband be expected to believe that his own wife was so utterly abandoned as the truth would have made her out to be? It is indeed possible that he may have wished and endeavored to disabuse Potiphar's mind by stating the truth, but that the lordly Egyptian was too much fired with anger to give an ear to what he could say in his own behalf. Yet, as nothing is said of Joseph's reply, we think it more likely that he chose rather to incur his master's displeasure, and sink under the weight of a false accusation, than to vindicate his honor by exposing the shame of a bad woman. So that he was consulting his master's peace of mind at the very time that he was condemning him to the horrors of a gloomy dungeon. As to the preservation of his life and the clearing up of his injured character, that he will leave to God, in whose hands his breath is, and whose are all his ways. Except in the case of the Saviour himself, where do we find a magnanimity that is a parallel to this? —¶ Put him into the prison. Heb.

אל ברת סוהר *el beth sohar*. It would seem that Moses himself thought that the word סוהר *sohar*, which occurs only in this and the two succeeding verses, and in ch. 40. 3, 5, stood in need of some kind of explanation of his immediately adding—'a place where the king's prisoners were bound.' It properly signifies *roundness*, and the phrase 'house of roundness,' or 'round-house' probably implies an edifice mostly subterranean, of which the roof or vault rising immediately from the surface of the ground, was round or shaped like an inverted bowl. This place is afterwards called a 'dungeon,' ch. 41. 15, and it appears from the reports of eastern travellers that dungeons so constructed, with an aperture at the top, through which the prisoners were let down, are still found in different parts of Asia. Comp. Jer. 33. 6.—¶ Where the king's prisoners were bound. Heb. אסורי המלך אסוררים *asere hammelek asurim*, where the bound-ones of the king were bound. The term is derived from אסר *asar*, to bind, to restrain, and here implies those who were restrained of their liberty. Whether in ordinary cases their limbs were literally bound in addition to their being confined, is not clear, but we learn elsewhere that this was the case with Joseph, at least in some part of his imprisonment; Ps. 106. 18, 'Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron.' Thus far then the accursed stratagem has succeeded. The exemplary Hebrew youth, the faithful steward, the pattern of purity, the humble fearer of God, the heir of a glorious promise, the future lord of Egypt, is consigned to the dreary walls of a prison. His feelings under this affecting reverse of condition must have been most pungently distressing. A stranger in a strange land, without a friend to sympathise with him or intercede for him, with what a heavy heart must he have entered the gloomy abode which not his crimes but his virtues had opened for



21 ¶ But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and

gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Exod. 3. 21. & 11. 3. & 12. 36. Ps. 106. 46. Prov. 16. 7. Acts 7. 9, 10.

him ! With what unutterable emotions would he think of home and exclaim, 'O if my poor father knew of this !' Again, with what deep anxiety would he reflect upon the mysterious ways of Providence. How difficult, with his imperfect light and knowledge, to reconcile an inflexible adherence to right, with the hard lot which he was now called to experience. But still, in the midst of all, and over all, his faith triumphed, and with meek submission to the divine will he bows to the severity of the stroke. It is doubtless somewhat surprising that his master, having so much power in his hands, should have satisfied himself with the punishment of imprisonment, instead of putting him at once to death. We know that 'jealousy is the rage of a man, and that he will not spare in the day of vengeance ;' but we know too that jealousy and every other passion is under the control of the Most High, who mightily restrains them, and binds them to a compliance with the purposes of his will. Potiphar's former regard for Joseph may have so far operated upon his mind as to prevent him from ordering his instant execution, and he may have entertained some faint doubts of his wife's veracity. But whatever motives withheld him from proceeding to extremities, certain it is that he was under the overruling influence of God, whose set time for Joseph's dissolution was not yet come. He had much to do in this world before he obtained his dismission to another. He was to become 'the shepherd and the stone of Israel.' He was to be the lord of Pharaoh's house, according to the dreams which came to him from heaven. He was to become the father of two powerful tribes in Israel. He was to see good and glorious days on earth ; and he could not perish while the pro-

mises he had received were yet unaccomplished. All the powers of darkness combined would find themselves unable to put one of God's servants to death, whilst any part of his work on earth remained unperformed. It was not Joseph's death, but his imprisonment, that was to be the means of his elevation ; and Potiphar, and even Potiphar's wife, served providence in all the evil which they did to Joseph. Whilst they were most egregiously violating God's commandments, they were fulfilling his counsels. What can man do against God ? Not only the righteous and the wise, and their works, but the unrighteous, the unwise, and the worst of their works, are in his hand.

21. *But the Lord was with Joseph, &c.* Joseph is incarcerated, but God, who had delivered him from the pit, accompanies him to the prison, and when the iron entered his soul, he prevented him from sinking under his calamities. Where providence leads us into difficulties and hardships, grace can sustain us under them ; and if we suffer for righteousness's sake, as Joseph did, we may be assured that it will be so. All will be right at last. Nothing shall eventually harm us, if we be followers of that which is good. It was not long before Joseph obtained favor in the eyes of the keeper of the prison, as he had before done in those of Potiphar. While we cannot doubt that his characteristic meekness and modesty tended strongly to work upon the kindly dispositions of the jailer, there is reason to think that Potiphar's rage had become softened ; for the jailer could not, we should suppose, have treated Joseph with so much humanity without Potiphar's leave. Upon calm reflection, he might see reason to think that the accusation against Joseph was not to be

22 And the keeper of the prison  
 \* committed to Joseph's hand all the  
 \* ch. 40, 3, 4.

credited, and yet he might think it imprudent to liberate him from confinement.—¶ *Shewed him mercy.* Heb. *וַיַּעַל אֱלֹהֵי חֶסֶד* *vayet alauv hesed, extended kindness to him.* It is certain that the original word *חֶסֶד* *hesed*, usually carries with it the idea of *gratuitous benefaction*, and we know not that it is at all forcing a practical inference from the words, to say that they were intended to intimate, that Joseph could not *claim* the favor which was shewn him in prison as the reward of merit. Even when God delivers us from unrighteous violence, or aids us in a good cause, we are not at liberty to refer his dealings to the *discharge of a debt* which he owes us.—¶ *Keeper of the prison.* Heb. *שַׂר בֵּית סוּהָר* *sar beth soher, captain of the round-house.*

22. *Committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners, &c.* It was scarcely to be expected that a poor prisoner, condemned to a dungeon for one of the worst of crimes, should find such favor with his keeper. The calling of a jailer is not peculiarly favorable to the kindlier sensibilities. It is a business which implies sternness and severity. But there is a power in true moral excellence to conciliate and captivate, even where it does not convert; and the hearts of the keepers of prisons are in the hands of the Lord, as well as the hearts of other men. Paul had much favor shewn him in bonds and imprisonments, for which Christians in every age ought to be thankful to God. He was in prisons oft, but his keepers allowed him paper and ink, with which those epistles were written that will be read with pleasure and edification while the world stands. Onesimus, and probably others, were begotten by Paul in his bonds. The following remarks, from Jamieson's 'Eastern Manners illustrative of Old

prisoners that *were* in the prison and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of *it*.

Testament History,' p. 93—97, on the general police of prison establishments among the Orientals, will perhaps throw some light on this part of the narrative. 'In passing through the cities and villages of Asiatic countries, one looks in vain for the gloomy and sequestered building, whose massy walls and grated windows point it out as the cheerless residence of the sons of crime; and talk to a native of the East, of the personage who, with awful importance in his face, and a ponderous key at his side, is master or porter at the gate, and he will tell you that such a character and such an edifice are there altogether unknown. Scarcely, indeed, is there any point in which the notions and practices of the people of the East differ so essentially from ours as in those which relate to the treatment of criminals; for while in Europe there are places reared for the confinement of offenders, and officers specially appointed to have the custody of them, the houses of the highest and greatest persons in the East, are not unfrequently dedicated to the purposes of a prison, and men who fill public and official stations of the greatest dignity, perform the duties of an office which, in our estimation, is the most ignoble. From the earliest times, the jails in the East have been of this description, and under the care of persons of elevated rank; and as it is highly probable that the place of Joseph's confinement was some dungeon, or secluded part of the house of Potiphar, who was the principal state officer of Egypt at the time, the knowledge of this circumstance furnishes a natural way of accounting for the freedom allowed to Joseph by the deputy jailor, who might have access to know his entire innocence of the charge that led to his being incarcerated; and who, from his impression of the

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand ; because <sup>1</sup> the LORD was

<sup>1</sup> ver. 2, 3.

virtuous and honorable character of the young Hebrew was persuaded he ran no risk in allowing his prisoner to go at large. Such discretionary power, no doubt, belonged to the Egyptian turnkey, as it does still to all jailers of the East, who, without being bound by any rules, such as prevail in Europe, or being obliged to place their prisoners in certain cells, according to the magnitude of their offences, are required simply to produce them when called for by the king or the judges, and are left to the exercise of their own discretion to determine whether the intermediate treatment of the persons under their custody, shall be of a mild or a severe character. If the jailer be a man of a humane disposition, he will accordingly extend to them every indulgence, and keep them under no greater restraints than are absolutely necessary to the right discharge of his duties ; whereas, if he be a cruel or unjust person, he has the power of annoying them in every possible way, with a view to extort a bribe from them or their friends. Of the former kind of treatment, Rauwolf gives a beautiful instance that came within his knowledge at Tripolis in Syria. He had some friends confined to the prison of that city, to whom he was allowed access at all hours. Sometimes he was permitted to remain with them all night, and there was no part, either of the jail itself, or of the extensive gardens connected with it, over which the indulgent keeper did not give him and his friends the privilege of walking ; they were even entertained in the jailor's own apartment, treated as members of his own family, and enjoyed such unrestricted liberty of doing whatever, and going wherever they pleased, that Rauwolf could see no difference between

with him : and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

their condition and his own. A very different treatment was experienced by an Armenian merchant, who is mentioned by Chardin as having been thrown into prison for some cause or other. So long as his money lasted, and he possessed the means of satisfying the cupidity of the jailer, he met with the greatest humanity and kindness, but the moment that his resources failed, and on his adversary who pursued him presenting a handsome bribe to the jailer, he experienced an abatement of the kind attentions of his keeper. His privileges were first abridged ; he was then subjected to close confinement, and treated with so great rigor, that he was not allowed any water but once in the twenty-four hours, and that, too, in the sultriest season of the year ; and, last of all, he was thrown into an unwholesome dungeon, to complete the catastrophe which all this inhumanity was designed to hasten.'—¶ *Whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it.* That is, it was done by his direction and authority. Chal. 'And all that was done there was done according to his word.' Thus Pilate is said to have given the body of Christ unto Joseph, Mark 15. 45, when he commanded it to be given, Mat. 27. 53.

23. *Looked not to any thing, &c.* Heb. *roeh eth kol meumah, saw not any thing ;* i. e. did not attend to or concern himself with any thing that was under his (Joseph's) hand. Nor did he call him to account, or question him in any way as to his management of whatever was submitted to his control. So unlimited was the trust reposed in him. Let a man be inflexibly honest and true, and he will never have reason to accuse the world of want of confidence. Dishonesty begets distrust.

## CHAPTER XL.

AND it came to pass after these things, *that* the <sup>a</sup>butler of the king of Egypt and *his* baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was <sup>b</sup>wroth

a Neh. 1. 11. b Prov. 16. 14.

## CHAPTER XL.

THE present chapter carries us forward another decided step towards the winding up of that wonderful drama, in which Joseph was at this time such a prominent but unconscious actor. The all-wise Jehovah is laying his plans, marshalling his forces, preparing his instruments, at very different times, and in very different places. The envy of Jacob's sons, the lasciviousness of Potiphar's wife, the disobedience of Pharaoh's servants, the anger of the king himself—all meet by a strange concurrence of circumstances, in one point, the elevation of Joseph to the right hand of the throne! Remove but one link, and the chain is broken asunder. Take away but a single stone, and the whole fabric falls to the ground.

1. *And it came to pass after these things*, &c. Heb. אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה *ahar haddebarim haellel, after these words*. See note on Gen. 15. 1 — ¶ *Buller*; i. e. cup-bearer; one who used to give the cup into the king's hand, v. 13. Thus the word is translated Neh. 1. 11, 'For I was the king's cup-bearer.' The Gr. renders it ἀρχιπονοχός *chief wine-pourer*, implying him who had charge of the rest, which, as appears from v. 2, is the true meaning. — ¶ *Baker*. Gr. ἀρχιτροποιός *chief bread-maker*. — ¶ *Had offended*. Heb. אָזַן *hate-u, had sinned (against)*. We are not informed either of the names or the crimes of these two servants of the king of Egypt; nor have we any wish to know, either the one

against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

3 <sup>c</sup> And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

c ch. 39. 20, 23.

or the other. We feel no interest in what concerns them any farther than as their lot was connected with that of Joseph. One of them came to an untimely end, and perhaps deserved it. The other deserved not to have his name recorded. He escaped the sword of Pharaoh; but his name, if it had been handed down to us, would never have been mentioned with honor, for he could receive favors without returning them when it was in the power of his hand to do it. He could suffer an innocent youth to languish in prison, without endeavoring to procure his release, although he could have told a story that would probably have gained him his liberty. He did indeed tell this story to the king a long time afterwards, but at a season when he hoped to recommend himself, by doing what he long before ought to have done in gratitude to Joseph.

2. *Was wroth against two of his officers*. That is, against the two above-mentioned, who are designated in the original by the term *eunuchs*; but this as we have seen, is a term of large import in the East.

3. *He put them in ward*. That is, in custody. It often happens to the righteous according to the wish of the wicked. Here we find two men, who sinned against their lord, the king of Egypt, confined in the same prison with Joseph. Yet the same prison is not the same thing to a good and to a bad man. The two offenders tremble in anxious dread of some worse

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; and they continued a season in ward.

5 ¶ And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his

dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream; the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

punishment; and the consciousness of their demerit, if they were really guilty, was more painful to them than the irons were to Joseph, though they entered into his soul. It takes away the sting of such calamities, to have the testimony of a good conscience.

4. *Charged Joseph with them.* Heb.

יִפְחֹד אֶת יוֹסֵף אִתָּם *yiphkod eth Yoseph ittam, made Joseph to visit them*; a phrase, as before remarked, equivalent to *investing one with authority*.—וַיַּשְׁרֵת *yeshareth otham, ministered to them*; i. e. by supplying them with food and other necessities. The captain of the guard had the command of the royal prison; and as this title is more than once before given to Potiphar, it is probable he is the person here alluded to. If so, he was in all likelihood now convinced of Joseph's innocence, and therefore loosed his fetters, though he did not dismiss him from confinement. But why did he not release Joseph entirely from the prison, if he thought him fit to be trusted with the care of other prisoners? In this his conduct is inexplicable. If Joseph was guilty of the crime imputed to him, the closest imprisonment was too good for him. But if the accusation were false, he ought to have been brought forth with honor, and to have received a compensation for the injury done to him by his master and mistress. It is possible that private reasons, springing from a mistaken sense of honor, or a too partial regard to his wife, operated to overbalance the consideration of justice. But though

Joseph had been unjustly enslaved, unjustly imprisoned, and unjustly detained in prison, yet he declined not the work enjoined by his master, even though that master confessed, by the trust reposed in him, that he deserved very different treatment. He was a better man than the men whom he served, and could not but have some intimations in his own mind that he should one day be exalted above them, yet at this time he cheerfully performed to them every service in his power. Let us learn from him cheerfully to accommodate ourselves to those circumstances in which divine providence is pleased to place us. They are unworthy to be exalted, who cannot bear to be humbled.

5. *And they dreamed a dream both of them.* Dreams for the most are worthy of little attention on any other account than as they indicate the present state of the body or mind. Yet God, who spake in divers manners to the fathers by the prophets, was pleased occasionally to speak to other men than the prophets by dreams and visions. We read in the following chapter of a prophetic dream presented to the imagination of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Here we have an account of a prophetic dream sent to two of Pharaoh's servants, men who were probably ignorant of the Most High. But the fancies as well as the hearts of those that know not God, are as much under his control, as the hearts of the saints, and he makes what impressions upon them he pleases. When dreams had such an origin there is no

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold, they *were* sad.

doubt that there was some peculiar impression made upon the dreamer's mind which enabled him to refer it to its proper source. These poor men had often dreamed upon their beds, but none of their dreams had taken such hold of their spirits as these. By a secret suggestion from above, they were convinced that their dreams were supernatural, and portended something that was to happen to them, though what it was they were as ignorant of as before their dreams.—¶ *Each man according to the interpretation of his dream.* That is, answering to the event. The expression implies that the dreams were not vain, empty, and unmeaning, as dreams usually are, but each of them highly significant, and capable of a sound interpretation, which Joseph gave. See Note on Josh. 24. 5, where the peculiar force of this phraseology is clearly explained.

6. *Behold they were sad.* Gr. *τεταραγμένοι* troubled. The original *זעפֿים* *zephim*, legitimately implies both mental vexation and irritation, and a sombre, lowering countenance. It occurs elsewhere four times, and is rendered, Dan. 1. 10, 'worse liking;' i. e. worse looking; Prov. 10. 3, 'fretting;' 2 Chron. 16. 19, 'wroth.' Supernatural dreams seem usually to have left an impression upon the minds of their recipients amounting to a violent agitation. Thus, Dan. 2. 1, 'Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.' So also the dream of Pilate's wife, Matt. 27. 19. We see from this what access God has to the spirits of men, and how easily he can

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that *were* with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye *so* sadly to-day?

arm their imaginations against their own peace. He can at pleasure send a secret panic into our souls and scare us, as he did Job, with dreams and visions, and even fill our days and nights with terror by presages and forebodings of uncertain evils. Let us then endeavor to preserve a pure conscience and a clear judgment, that we may neither fear where no fear is, nor be shaken in our minds by the apprehension of those evils that cannot be avoided.

7. *And he asked Pharaoh's officers, &c.* Their melancholy and dejected appearance excited his sympathy, and he kindly inquires into the cause of it. It was not from an impertinent curiosity that he proposed the question, but being habitually pitiful, courteous, and kindly affectioned, he would fain know what ailed them, that he might administer all the comfort in his power. Joseph indeed had private griefs of his own of no common character, and we might be prompted to ask, why he was not as sad in heart and aspect as the two servants of Pharaoh. But he had a source of calm and even cheerful resignation to the will of God, to which they were strangers, and so far from sinking under the weight of his calamities, or being absorbed in his own troubles, he generously proposes to aid his fellow-prisoners in bearing the burden of theirs.—¶ *Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?* Heb. *מדוע פניכם רעים* *maddua penekem raim*, *wherefore are your faces evil?* Gr. *σφοδρὰ* from *σφοδρὸς* *grim* and *ὤψ* *countenance*; i. e. sad, gloomy, morose, desponding. The same word occurs in a similar sense in the New Testa-

8 And they said unto him, \* We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And

d ch. 41. 15.

ment, Mat. 6. 16, 'When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a *sad countenance*,' (Gr. *συθροποι*.) Luke 24. 17, 'What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are *sad*?' (Gr. *συθροποι*.) And as 'evil' signifies *sad*, so on the other hand 'good' is sometimes used in the sense of *cheerful or merry*. Thus, Est. 1. 10, 'On the seventh day when the heart of the king was *merry* with wine.' Heb. '*good* with wine.' Is. 65. 14, 'Behold my servants shall sing *for joy of heart*.' Heb. 'for *goodness* of heart.'

8. There is *no interpreter of it*. He found upon inquiry that they had each had a dream which, from the circumstances attending them, and the impression left upon their spirits, they considered extraordinary. Both of them dreamed, and both in one night. The dreams of both also related to their past employments, and they could not resist the belief that they were ominous of something which was to happen to them. But what it was they could not divine, and having neither any interpreter at hand to instruct them, nor the liberty of resorting to one, they were exceedingly dejected. So miserable a thing is it to stand in dread of uncertain evils. When men know the worst of what they have to fear, they will make up their minds and fortify their spirits to bear the expected shock. But when they apprehend themselves exposed to some dreadful evils without knowing distinctly what they are, how does the heart sink in the prospect! Heré we have a proof of the inestimable value of our religion, that it furnishes us with effectual antidotes against

Joseph said unto them, \* *Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you.*

e ch. 41. 16. Dan. 2. 11, 28, 47.

every sorrow, and every fear. The butler and baker would have thought themselves happy could they have procured an interpreter to set their minds at rest about their dreams. But, alas! what could they reasonably expect from such interpreters of dreams as Egypt afforded? Were they sure that the interpreters would not impose upon them some groundless imaginations of their own hearts? Or if their dreams portended some great evils, had the interpreters any power to avert them, or to furnish them with any adequate support under them? How vain are the wishes and hopes of minds unenlightened by revelation!—¶ *Do not interpretations belong to God?* Gr. 'Is not the manifestation of it by God?' Chal. 'Surely from before God is the interpretation of a dream.' By this question, which was a tacit reproof to his companions, Joseph aimed to call off their thoughts from the lying pretensions of false prophets, diviners, and magicians, and to lead them to place their hope in the true God, who alone knows what is to befall any of his creatures, who alone can avert the evils which we dread, or turn them to our comfort.—¶ *Tell me them, I pray you.* Let it not be set down to the account of an undue presumption in Joseph that he here *seems* to claim for himself the prerogative which he had just before ascribed exclusively to God. He merely intimates hereby that God would make him an organ, by which to impart to them the information they so much desired. It is probable that when he first put the question to them respecting the cause of their sadness he thought nothing of dreams or their so-

9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said unto him, In my dream, behold, a vine *was* before me;

10 And in the vine *were* three branches: and it *was* as though it budded, *and* her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

11 And Pharaoh's cup *was* in mine hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed, them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

lution, but that now all of a sudden he was conscious of an extraordinary prophetic impulse upon his spirit, enabling him to act the part of an interpreter. Yet he required that the dreams should first be made known to him. God could easily have saved him the trouble of learning from the men what they had dreamed. The same Spirit that taught him to interpret could have made known to him the dreams, as we know was the case with Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. But in this instance the dreams had not been forgotten by the dreamers, and God does not impart that knowledge supernaturally which can be acquired by the ordinary methods. It was sufficient for Joseph to be enabled to show the meaning of the dreams when informed what they were. And even this was ultimately rather for his own sake than for theirs.

9. *Behold a vine was before me, &c.* It was not strange that a butler, deprived of his office and his liberty, should dream of wine, and grapes, and cups, and of putting a cup into his master's hand. Had Joseph been left wholly to the direction of his native sagacity, he would have told the butler that his dream was the pure effect of his waking thoughts; that he had often

12 And Joseph said unto him, *This is* the interpretation of it: The three branches *are* three days:

13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh *lift up* thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

f ver. 18. ch. 41. 12, 25. Judg. 7. 14. Dan. 2. 36. & 4. 19. g ch. 41. 26. h 2 Kings 25. 27. Ps. 3. 3. Jer. 52. 31.

anxiously wished for restoration to his former office; and that his fancy, in the time of sleep, had gratified him with the enjoyment of his desires. But we shall soon see that there were other particulars in the dream which would have completely baffled his unassisted reason.

10. *In the vine were three branches.* Heb. שריגים *sarigim*. By this term is undoubtedly meant three little shoots just perceptible and budding on the bark of the stalk. It was from these that the clusters grew. The design is to intimate the rapidity of the growth. The phraseology in the original is in like manner exceedingly brief, broken, and abrupt.—¶ *Her blossoms shot forth.* The wonder of the dream was that the vine came so soon to maturity; that a process which usually requires the space of several months was apparently completed in as many moments. He had scarcely time to contemplate its germinating buds before he beheld the perfect flower, and this with equal suddenness gave way to the ripened clusters.

12, 13. *This is the interpretation of it, &c.* The general interpretation given by Joseph of the dream is quite obvious, and one that in all likelihood would have suggested itself to any of the pro-



fessed *oneirocritics* whom the butler might have consulted. He would naturally infer that the man was very desirous of being restored to his office, and he would be very apt to say that such was the drift of the dream. Still it would have been a mere guess. Nothing short of divine inspiration could have *assured* Joseph that the dream was to be realized. But there was another circumstance which left no room to doubt whether the interpretation was only a happy conjecture or a divine discovery. The *time* was specified. The three branches were three days. What human sagacity could have divined that the branches of the vine had any reference to time?—or, if they had, whether three days, or three months, or three years, were meant. Anacharsis the Scythian said that a vine had three branches, the first of which produced pleasure, the second intoxication, the third remorse. Might not some such interpretation of the three branches have appeared as natural as that which Joseph gave? But it was wisely ordered that one part of the dream should require a divinely inspired interpreter. It was God's design to assure the butler that Joseph obtained his wisdom, not from man, but by revelation from above. And as to Joseph himself, he would certainly have acted a very foolish part had he explained the three branches of three days that were to elapse before the fulfilment of the dream, unless he had been well assured that God spake by his mouth. That he was well assured of the truth of his prediction, appears still more clearly from the request which he made to the butler. This request must have exposed him to contempt, if his prediction had not been verified by the event.—¶ *The three branches are three days.* That is, signify three days; a very important sense

of the substantive verb *are, is*, affording a clue to the real import of numerous passages like the following; Rev. 1. 20, 'The seven candlesticks which thou sawest *are* (i. e. signify) the seven churches;' Rev. 17. 9, 10, 'The seven heads *are* (signify) seven mountains, and there (or, they) *are* seven kings;' i. e. kingdoms; by which is implied that the 'heads' and the 'mountains' were equivalent symbols, both signifying 'kingdoms.' Luke 22. 19, 'This *is* my body;' i. e. *signifies* my body; an interpretation subversive of the doctrine of transubstantiation. So v. 20, 'This cup *is* (signifies) the New Testament in my blood.' Gen. 28. 22, 'And this stone *shall be* (shall signify) God's house.'—¶ *Shall lift up thine head.* This implies more than the mere fact of releasing from bondage. It is equivalent to promoting, preferring, raising to honor, or in this case *restoring to a former office*. Thus, Ps. 3. 3, 'But thou Lord art a shield for me, my glory, and *the lifter up of mine head.*' Jer. 52. 31, 'Evilmerodach, king of Babylon, *lifted up the head* of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison.' This, from v. 32, seems to be equivalent to 'setting his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon.' The phrase 'to lift up the head' is used also in the sense of *reckoning, enumerating, or taking the sum*, as in a census. Thus, Ex. 30. 12, 'When thou *takest the sum* of the children of Israel.' Heb. 'When thou *liftest up the head.*' Understood thus, the import of the present passage is this; 'In the review or survey of the officers of the court, thou shalt be *enumerated* and have a place as formerly.' Gr. 'Pharaoh shall remember thy principality.' Chal. 'Shall remember thee'

14. *Think on me when it shall be well with thee.* Heb. זכרתי אתך

14 But <sup>i</sup> think on me when it shall be well with thee, and <sup>k</sup> shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house :

<sup>i</sup> Luke 23. 42. <sup>k</sup> Josh. 2. 12. 1 Sam. 20. 14, 15. 2 Sam. 9. 1. 1 Kings 2. 7.

*zekartani itteka, remember me with thee.* In the enjoyment of the sweets of recovered liberty, do not forget me. Although Joseph patiently bore his confinement, yet he earnestly desired deliverance, and felt entirely justified in using all proper means for obtaining it. The terms in which the request is made are exceedingly tender and pathetic, and they recognise one of the great principles by which God is governed in visiting afflictions upon men. It is that they may be able to enter into the feelings of those who are in trouble, and may be ready to weep with those who weep, and to dry up their tears by offices of kindness. The chosen people were required to shew kindness to the stranger, because they knew the heart of a stranger, from what they themselves had suffered as strangers in the land of Egypt. So here Joseph might presume that the butler, who had known the heart of a prisoner, would kindly remember and intercede for his poor companion in bonds. He could not indeed by his own authority bring Joseph out of prison, but he might, by his influence with Pharaoh, obtain his release. We may do much good by the hands of others, where our own personal power cannot be put forth, and in so doing we not only make a debtor of him to whom the benefit is shewn, but of him also who is excited by us to perform the benefit. Indeed the last is, of the two, more indebted to us than the first; for 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

-- *¶ Make mention of me to Pha-*

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: <sup>i</sup> and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

1 ch. 39. 20.

*raoh.* Let him know that I foretold thine advancement, by giving thee a true interpretation of thy dream. Such a proof of wisdom more than human might of course be expected to gain the favor of the king, as soon as it should be represented to him. Pharaoh might have his dreams as well as his servants, and he might be glad to have a man in his court who could one day perhaps perform for him a similar useful and acceptable service. — *¶ And bring me out of this house.* That is, cause me to be brought out; a common idiom. See Note on Gen. xli. 13. Gr. 'Thou shalt bring me out of this prison.'

15. *For indeed I was stolen away,* &c. Heb. גָּנַב גֻּנְבִּי *gunnob gunnabi, stealing I was stolen.* The butler might perhaps have been afraid to recommend Joseph to the favor of Pharaoh, because he might think that his imprisonment was the just punishment of his crimes. Joseph, to obviate this suspicion, tells him, that neither his slavery nor his imprisonment were the just reward of his own conduct. He was by birth an Hebrew, and had been stolen away from his native country. But was this a true statement of the matter of fact? Did not the Ishmaelites *buy* him? True indeed, they did; but it was of them that had no right to sell him; them that had as it were, robbed him of himself; and therefore he was in reality *stolen*. The charge holds good of his brethren. Such all will admit, would be the purchase by a kidnapper of a

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also *was* in my dream, and behold, *I had* three white baskets on mine head:

17 And in the uppermost basket *there was* of all manner of bake-meats for Pharaoh: and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon mine head.

child from an unprincipled nurse; and such is the purchase of slaves to this day on the coast of Africa. But while Joseph affirms himself to have been *stolen* from his country, he does not tell by whom. Deeply as his brethren had injured him, he does not choose to publish their fault. In employing the term *stolen* without any particulars, he seems generously to have intended to throw a veil over their iniquitous conduct; and the same noble spirit is discovered in what he says of his treatment in Egypt. Wishing only to justify himself, and not to criminate others, he forbears to relate by what wicked arts his mistress had procured his imprisonment, or to vent any reproaches upon her. He is content with simply asserting his innocence. Any thing farther was in fact unnecessary. Within three days he was to receive a virtual testimonial from God himself; for if he were the man his mistress represented him to be, was it supposable that God, who hates all wickedness, would have given him the knowledge of those secrets that were hidden from other men? Yet who can help admiring the example here displayed of forbearance, under the foulest and most injurious treatment! If ever a human being had occasion to complain of wrong and to expose the most crying injustice, it was Joseph in view of his present hard lot. Yet waving the prerogatives of injured innocence he meekly commits himself to him that judgeth righteously, and leaves it to infinite Wisdom to vindicate and deliver him as it should seem to him good.—¶ *Out of the land of the Hebrews.* That is, the land

of the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrew. It is by faith founded on the divine promises, that he gives it this appellation, as the country then generally went by the name of the 'land of Canaan.'—¶ *Into the dungeon.* Heb. בִּבְּרִי *babbor, into the pit, or cistern*; the same word as that applied to the *pit* into which Joseph was cast by his brethren. It is to be inferred from the narrative that the gift of prophecy vouchsafed to Joseph was bestowed only at particular times, for though he could foretell the deliverance of the butler from prison he was not enabled to foresee his own.

16, 17. *When the chief baker saw, &c.* The chief butler was now a happy man. It is true, he might still be in some doubt what credit was due to the young man who gave him such hopes. But men are strongly disposed to believe what they wish to be true. The exposition of the dream was at least very plausible. The young man spoke like one assured of the truth of what he said; and his countenance helped to procure credit to the truth of his words. At any rate, the terrors raised by the dream were at an end. If any thing was portended by it, it was good and not evil. The countenance of the butler was brightened, as if a warrant had already been issued from the court for his liberation, and his companion in misery ardently wished to participate in his good fortune. Seeing that the interpretation of the butler's dream was good, that is, that it carried an air of *intrinsic plausibility*, and that it *portended* good, he is induced to relate his own dream also, in hopes that it might

receive as favourable a solution. We naturally desire to be as happy as our neighbours, especially if they were once as unhappy as ourselves, and it is hard not to give way to the promptings of that hope, which is the great sweetener of the miseries of life. Yet it will be our wisdom to suppress those elevations of hope which may terminate in cruel disappointment. Let us remember that divine providence is under no obligation to be equally kind to us all, and that prosperity and adversity, life and death, are distributed to men by One who has a right to do what he will with his own. Whilst then we hope for the best, let us fear the worst, and be prepared for any event that may occur, for any tidings that we may hear. —¶ *I also was in my dream.* I was transfused, as it were, into a dreaming state. —¶ *Three white baskets on mine head.* Heb. סלי חרי *salle hori*; a phrase of very doubtful import. Lexicographers and critics differ greatly as to the signification of the latter term חרי *hori*; some understanding it of the baskets themselves, others of the contents of the baskets. In the former case, it is to be referred to the root חרר *hor* or *hur*, conveying the sense of the Lat. *foramen*, a hole, an aperture, a perforation, and to be understood of the holes or interstices in the twigs of which the baskets were composed. In other words, the phrase implies that the baskets were made of *wicker-work*, reticulated like nets. On the second supposition, the root is חרר *havar*, to be white; and חרי *hori* is then taken to imply the *white loaves*, rolls, or cakes contained in the baskets. This is confirmed by most of the ancient versions. Gr. 'Three baskets full of fine bread.' Chal. 'Three baskets full of the principal (or best) bread.' Targ. Jon. 'Three baskets of pure bread.' Vulg. 'Three baskets of fine flour.' But as it is said in the next verse that the upper-

most of the three baskets contained all the various work of the baker, the whole three could not be very well named, from the eatables which they contained, *baskets of white bread*. On the whole, therefore, the former rendering seems most to be preferred, and this is countenanced by Symmachus, who gives τρια κava βαiva *three baskets of branches*. Jarchi combines the two senses, explaining the phrase of wicker-baskets, made of twigs which were white from having the bark peeled off. But this seems far-fetched and forced. The little importance of the subject would perhaps have excused still less being said upon it. The dreamer in this case, however, had very little reason to hope for a favourable interpretation of his dream. It was a very different one from that of the butler. The butler pressed the grapes into the king's cup, and put it into his hand; but the bake-meats which the chief baker carried in his basket never went to the king's table; they were eaten from off his head by the hungry birds. Yet the poor man hoped his dream might have as favourable a meaning given to it as his neighbor's. We have no reason to be surprised at his vain expectation. How often do we see sick persons promising themselves life, when their physicians see nothing but symptoms of their approaching death. —¶ *All manner of bake-meats.* Heb. 'Of all manner of food of Pharaoh, the work of a baker.' It is giving the original too restricted a sense to confine it to that of *baked meats*, unless meats be taken in the old English sense of *meals*, as explained in Gen 4. 3. The term means properly *baked food* in general. Gr. 'Of all kinds which Pharaoh did eat of the work of the bread-maker.' Chal. 'All which was made by the baker's art.'

18, 19. *This is the interpretation thereof.* As far as their baskets were

18 And Joseph answered, and said, <sup>m</sup> This *is* the interpretation thereof: The three baskets *are* three days:

m ver. 12.

concerned the interpretation agreed with that of the dream of the butler. How anxiously did the poor baker wait for the next words of the interpreter! How fondly did he hope that the third day might bring the same happy change of circumstances to himself, which was already promised to his companion! But alas! his hope was soon turned to despair.—¶ *Pharaoh shall lift up thine head from off thee.* The expression in the original is the same as that respecting the butler, v. 13, implying that he also should be reckoned among the officers, but intimating by the additional phrase, ‘from off thee,’ that the enumeration would be fatal to him. It is probable that beheading in the first instance is the punishment here predicted, after which his decapitated body was to be hung up ‘on a tree,’ i. e. a gallows-tree, gibbet, or cross, to become prey to carnivorous birds. The flesh with which the birds were to be fed, was not of his bake-meats, but of his own body. If ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick,’ how dreadful is it to have hope entirely extinguished. Yet such was the melancholy lot of the baker when he heard the interpretation of his dream. Although he did not know what was meant by it till this moment, yet the words of Joseph must have carried conviction with them to a man already possessed with the firm belief that his dream was significant of what was to befall him. Whether he were to suffer justly or unjustly, we are not informed; but as his death was so near, it was perhaps an advantage to him to know it. Had

19 <sup>n</sup> Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

n ver. 13.

he been rightly affected, he had now an opportunity of learning at the hand of a servant of God, what kind of preparation it behoved him to make for death. At any rate, let it not be thought any disparagement to the kindly feelings of Joseph that he thus plainly declared a message of such terrible import to a fellow-creature. It was no doubt a source of inexpressible grief to him, to be obliged to be the organ of such heavy tidings. But a necessity was laid upon him to interpret the dream. He had in effect promised to do it. Had he now refused to satisfy the baker's desire, his silence would either have been an acknowledgment of the falsity of the claims, or it would have been little better than the words in which the fatal sentence was pronounced. But if he broke silence at all he must tell the truth. He could not but speak what was made known by God to be communicated to his companions; and the unfortunate man *must* at any rate have heard his sentence within three days at farthest, even though Joseph had been silent. Besides this, there was no doubt another reason why Joseph declared plainly what he had learned from God. He wished to have it known among the Egyptians that interpretations belonged to the God of the Hebrews, and that he alone could shew things that were to come to pass, Joseph afterward received the name of Zaphnath-paaneah, the revealer of secrets; but it was his desire to have it known, that his God was the fountain of all his knowledge, that confidence in any other God, or

20 ¶ And it came to pass the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 And he restored the chief

o Mat. 14. 6. p Mark 6. 21. q ver. 13, 19. Mat. 25. 19. r ver. 13.

in any other way of coming to the knowledge of futurity, but by revelation from him, was vain and idle.—¶ *The birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.* The terror of approaching death would be aggravated to the poor man, by the prospect of the indignities with which his body was to be treated. Here we have an infinite advantage over the benighted heathen. Our religion furnishes us with effectual consolation, not only against the fear of death, but against all that the wrath of man can do against either our bodies or our names, after the stroke of death. We read of the bodies of the saints having been cast out to the wild beasts of the earth, and to the fowls of heaven. But were the bodies of Christians to be swallowed up by the most abhorred of God's creatures, they sleep in Jesus, and God will bring them with him at the day of his appearance and kingdom.

20. *And it came to pass, &c.* It is a custom of long standing with kings and other great men, particularly in eastern countries, to celebrate their birth-days with feasts and gladness. And we have all reason to rejoice at the remembrance of our birth into the world, if our lives have been employed for the purposes for which they were given. Yet Job, the most patient of men, was at a certain period of his life overwhelmed with such dreadful calamities, that he cursed the day of his birth, and

23\*

butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

s Neh. 2. 1. t ver. 19. u Job 19. 14. Ps. 31. 12. Eccl. 9. 15, 16. Amos 6. 6.

the night in which it was said, 'There is a man-child brought into the world.' Let us endeavour so to live, that we may always rejoice in our existence. It is not improbable that Pharaoh, on this festive occasion, wished to perform some signal act of grace, that all his people might rejoice in the clemency of his government. With this view he lifted up the head of the chief butler, by raising him again to his former station. But at the same time to warn his servants against provoking his displeasure, he lifted up the head of the chief baker in a very different sense, by depriving him of life. What reason he had to make this difference between his two servants, we cannot say; but we know that he fulfilled the will of God, and verified the prediction of his servant Joseph.

21. *And he restored the chief butler, &c.* 'The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.' The chief butler's deliverance would give him double joy, when he considered that his fate might have been the same with that of his unhappy companion. Pain and fear are the objects of great aversion while they are present, but some of the sweetest pleasures of life would be wanting if they were never felt.

22. *He hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.* If both these men's dreams had portended pardon, the interpretation given by Joseph might have been considered

merely as a lucky conjecture. It was reasonable to suppose that on the approaching festivity of the king's birthday, he would signalize his clemency by some acts of grace to offenders. But who could have foreseen that he would make one of his servants to feel the severity of his displeasure on the happy day, whilst he pardoned the other; or that he would execute his displeasure by hanging his dead body on a tree and exposing it as a prey to the fowls of heaven? Every circumstance tended to establish the credit of Joseph, as a man that enjoyed intercourse with heaven; and just in proportion to the evidence on this score, was the inexcusableness of the Egyptians in refusing to acknowledge the God of heaven and earth. In like manner the perfect accomplishment of the various prophecies of the Scriptures leaves us without excuse if we withhold our belief of its divine inspiration.

23. *Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph.* We should now have expected to read of the chief butler's intercession to the king in behalf of the amiable and injured youth at whose hands he had received so signal a favour. True indeed it was Pharaoh and not Joseph who had delivered him from prison, but how could he drop from his memory the high obligations under which he lay to one who had, by interpreting his dreams, relieved his mind of the tormenting apprehensions which had preyed upon it? Every thought of his former unhappy condition, and of its joyful reverse, we should suppose, would have reminded him of his prison-companion. Yet alas, for the black ingratitude of the human heart!—no sooner is he released from prison than he loses all remembrance of his kind benefactor! No doubt, in the first transports of his joy, at learning the import of his dream, he intended to show his gratitude to the Hebrew youth. But

becoming soon swallowed up in his own concerns, he forgot one who had turned his sorrow into joy and gladness, and left him for two long years to pine amidst the horrors of solitary confinement, and to feel the pang of unmerited neglect. How strangely does prosperity intoxicate the mind, and what callousness does it sometimes bring over the finer feelings of our nature! How common is it for persons in high life to forget the poor, even those to whom they have been under the greatest obligations! The ingratitude of the butler was marked by a special enormity. Even had he owed nothing to Joseph, it was certainly a duty imposed by the laws of humanity to do what he could for his relief, when he knew him to be unjustly enslaved and imprisoned. But he was utterly inexcusable, after what Joseph had done for him, when he did not so much as open his mouth to Pharaoh on his behalf. Our own instinctive sense of right, teaches us to reprobate his conduct. His memory will be held in detestation while the world lasts. The word of God has recorded his infamy, that others may be warned to shew proper returns of gratitude to their benefactors. As for ourselves, we can indeed be under no apprehensions that the book of God will transmit our character to future ages. The chief butler felt just as little fear of that perpetual dishonor to which his memory was to be subjected by a book that should be read to the end of the world. But let us not forget that there is another book of God which contains the record of every individual's life—a book which shall be opened before the assembled world! What confusion will then cover the faces of those who shall be found to have been insensible to the favors done them, either by their fellow-men or their Maker! If all men abhor those who return not good for

## CHAPTER XLI.

AND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pha-

good, when it is in the power of their hand to do it; how black is our ingratitude if we are not penetrated with ardent love to him, who not only pitied us in our low estate, but wrought redemption for us by a life of sorrow, and by an accursed death?

## CHAPTER XLI.

1. *It came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed.* Whether we are to date the two full years from the time that Joseph was put into the prison, or rather from the time that the butler was taken out of it, which was the event last spoken of, the mention of the time is designed to point out the length of Joseph's confinement. Two years of imprisonment will appear a much longer time to one who has not learned to bear the evils of life with an uncommon degree of fortitude. In fact, it is not so much the intenseness of our trials, as the duration of them, that is the greatest test of our patience. Even those who have been taught of God are strongly tempted, under long continued afflictions, to weary of the Lord's correction. In regard to Joseph, too, it is to be recollected, that he was now in the vigor and prime of life, the period which to men in ease and health is the most pleasant of all others; for he was thirty years old when his troubles came to an end. He might think it a severe allotment to live all the best of his days in a prison, when he had done nothing to deserve it; and the prison would be the more wearisome to him, that his hopes of deliverance founded upon God's word and providence seemed to fail forevermore. From the gift of interpretation bestowed upon him,

Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river.

2 And behold, there came up

as well as from his own youthful dreams which remained uninterpreted, he could scarcely doubt that something extraordinary was intended for him, yet how severely was he tried by being suffered to languish week after week, and month after month, in his dreary prison house. But though the butler had forgotten him, God had not; and his plans were ripening apace for his servants' deliverance. The clouds which have so long darkened his prospects are just beginning to disperse, and a brighter and more cheering horizon about to open upon him. Though he would gladly have been indebted both to Pharaoh and the butler for his release, yet God will so order it that he shall be obliged to neither of them. Kings are liable to hunger and thirst, like other men; kings must sleep, and their sleep may be disturbed by dreams, like that of other men; and here we find the sovereign of Egypt induced, from the effect of his nocturnal visions, to send for Joseph *for his own sake*, in order to receive a favor *from* him instead of conferring one *upon* him.—¶ *Behold, he stood by the river.* Gr. *wero eoravai he thought he stood.* The river meant was the Nile, so called by way of emphasis without specification, as being of course understood when mentioned in connexion with Egypt. In like manner the Euphrates, from its celebrity, is called simply 'the river.' Ps. 72. 8, 'He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.' As rain never falls in Egypt, and the fertility of the soil has in all ages depended upon the annual overflow of the Nile, we may hence see the propriety of associating the images of *plenty* and *famine*, in



out of the river seven well-favoured kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

3 And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

4 And the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

the dream of Pharaoh, with the river of Egypt.

2. *Behold, there came up out of the river, &c.* This dream would appear at first view to be but a jumble of incoherent ideas, which no wise man would retain in his memory. What other man ever thought, even in a dream, of kine, which are not carnivorous animals, or of ears of corn, eating one another? Yet it is certain that this dream was of God, and that it was an intimation of future events of exceedingly important consequences both to the Egyptian nation, and to all the neighboring nations, and even to the church of God. 'God's ways are not our ways,' nor ought we to measure his providential administration by our own rules. He is governed by his good pleasure as to the subjects of divine revelations. The men of his counsel are indeed for the most part devout and holy men, but worldly minded kings and princes have sometimes for wise purposes been favored with communications from above, though usually wrapped in a dark veil of symbols and allegories. It was not the will of God that Pharaoh should understand his own dream, till it was explained by a heaven-taught interpreter. If the meaning had been so plain, that it could have been explained by the wise men of Egypt, the design for which it was sent

5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6 And behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, *it was* a dream.

to Pharaoh would have been defeated. It was for Joseph's sake, and for the sake of his father's house, that Pharaoh dreamed, and that his dream required such an interpreter as Joseph. —¶ *Behold, there came up.* Heb. *הִנֵּה עֹלֹת* *hinneh oloth, behold, coming up.* The Hebrew has peculiar life and animation in its descriptions, and more than any other language pictures things as at present living, moving, and acting. See note on Gen. 46. 8. —¶ *In a meadow.* Heb. *בְּאַהֲרָר* *baahru, among the sedge;* i. e. in the low marshy places by the river's brink, where reeds and sedges grow. The original *אֲהֲרָר* *ahru* occurs only here, and Job 8. 11, where it is translated *flag*; 'Can the rush grow up without mire? can the *flag* grow without water?' Jerome says in his Hebrew Questions on Genesis, 'I have heard that by the Egyptians every thing green which grows in marshes or swamps is called, in their language, by this name.'

5—7. *Dreamed the second time.* For the reason of this see Note on v. 32. —¶ *Rank and good.* That is, fat and plump. Gr. 'Choice and well-seeming.'—*Blasted with the east wind.* A hot and scorching wind which in eastern regions is most pernicious to corn and fruits. Its usual effects may be in some measure learned from Ezek. 19. 12, and Hos. 13. 15; but it will be

8 And it came to pass in the morning, <sup>a</sup>that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all <sup>b</sup>the magicians of Egypt, and

a Dan. 2. 1. & 4. 5, 19. b Exod. 7. 11, 22. Isa. 29. 14. Dan. 1. 20. & 2. 2. & 4. 7.

necessary to have recourse to the accounts of modern travellers to complete the picture. See 'Scripture Illustrations,' p. 348.—¶ *Devoured*. This word in the original is not the same with that applied above to the kine, v. 4, and there rendered 'did eat up;' nor is it intended to imply the action of *eating* or *swallowing* on the part of the ears, but merely that of *abolishing*, *consuming*, or *making way with*. In this sense the term occurs, Job 2. 3, 'Thou movedst me against him to *destroy* him without a cause.' Heb. 'to devour him.' Prov. 1. 12, 'Let us *swallow them up* alive; i. e. let us utterly make way with them. 2. Sam. 20. 19, 'Why wilt thou *swallow up* the inheritance of the Lord?' i. e. waste away, destroy. In some manner not precisely defined, the rank and full ears were *abolished*, *consumed*, or *made to vanish into* the thin and blasted.—¶ *Behold it was a dream*; or, 'behold the dream;' i. e. though his sleep departed from him his dream did not; it still remained with him, causing a painful perplexity to his mind.

8. *His spirit was troubled*. Heb. חָטְפָאֵם *tippaem*, was smitten as with a hammer; i. e. thrown into a violent consternation. But why was Pharaoh's spirit troubled by a dream? Might not his princely education have set him above the credulous fears of the vulgar, who are often tormented by the illusions of their own fancies? We may admit that in Egypt both princes as well as common people were like the Athenians, in later times, in all things too superstitious.' It

all the <sup>c</sup>wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dreams; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

c Matt. 2. 1.

was their common custom to pay a senseless regard to dreams and omens. But at this time the trouble of the king had an adequate cause. His dream was from God. God impressed it upon his mind that it was a dream out of the ordinary course, and that it was significant of some very important events, but what those events were he could not guess. God has the spirits of the weakest, the wisest, the greatest, the bravest of mankind, under his control, and can fix what convictions and terrors he pleases in the minds of those who may affect to laugh at vulgar prejudices. Was there ever a more undaunted courage than Nebuchadnezzar possessed? And yet God could make him afraid like a grasshopper by the visions of his head upon his bed. He that made the proud leviathans of the world, can make his sword to approach unto them, and to pierce them with deep wounds which none but himself can heal.—¶ *He sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, &c.* Heb. חַרְטֻמִּים *hartumim*, a word of which the derivation is unknown, and consequently the true import not satisfactorily determined. The Gr. renders it ἐξηγῆται *expositors*; i. e. professed interpreters of hidden things. From Ex. 7. 11, it appears that they used 'enchantments,' or incantations, and this is in effect all that is known respecting them. We can only say in general of such terms *magicians*, *wise men*, *astrologers*, *sorcerers*, &c. that they denote a class of men who laid claim to supernatural skill in certain occult arts and sciences, in interpreting dreams and oracles, explaining signs,

and unriddling mysteries, but as to the exact shades of difference by which their several meanings are to be discriminated from each other, they have never been settled with certainty. It may be conceded that if Pharaoh's opinion of this class of men had been just, he was wise in seeking information from them of what it so much concerned him to know. If God is pleased to speak to us, it is our duty to seek the knowledge of what he says, and to borrow from others that wisdom which we have not in ourselves. If there be any that may be reasonably presumed to know the mind of God better than ourselves, we sin against our own souls, if we refuse to avail ourselves of their superior light. But it was the unhappiness of the king of Egypt that his magicians knew as little as he did himself of God and of his will. Their high reputation was founded on ignorance and imposture. Accordingly, though he told them his dream, which he perfectly recollected, yet none of them could explain it to him. Unlike the wise men of Babylon whom Nebuchadnezzar summoned to his aid on a like occasion, and who confidently promised to unravel the king's dream as soon as it was made known to them, the magicians of Egypt, when Pharaoh's dream was rehearsed in their ears, did not pretend to know the meaning of it. All their combined wisdom durst not pretend to penetrate the secrets of divine providence, to which it referred. Considering the antiquity of the symbolical mode of instruction in Egypt, it is somewhat surprising that the magicians did not so much as assume to understand the king's dream. Oxen or ears of corn are very natural emblems of fertility, since corn is produced by the labors of oxen. Kine and ears of corn on the brink of the river, might very naturally have been supposed to

denote the increase of the fruits of the earth, for which the Egyptians were indebted to the overflowings of the river. If fat kine and full ears of corn on the banks of the Nile, were fit emblems of an abundant harvest, lean cattle and thin ears might have been justly considered as emblems of a very scanty produce. But it seems either that such thoughts did not enter their minds, or that they did not know what to think of the *number* of the kine and of the ears of corn. And here we can see how wisely it was ordered that the butler was permitted to behave so ungratefully to Joseph as not to mention his interpretation of the dreams in the prison. For that interpretation, had it been known, might have served as a key to the wise men to open Pharaoh's dream, and thus the honor of expounding it would not have been reserved for Joseph. The three branches on the vine and the three baskets on the head of the baker, were *three days*. By a parity of reasoning, the seven kine and the seven ears might denote, not seven days, but *seven years*. We say, not seven days, because there could not be merely seven days of plenty or famine, either from the labors of the kine, or from the abundance or scarcity of the waters of the Nile. But the plenty or scarcity of the *years* can be known beforehand with certainty, from the rise of its waters in the season when it overflows its banks. As it is not probable that the magicians and wise men of Egypt would have scrupled a lie to advance or preserve their credit, it may still appear wonderful that they did not agree to give some pretended signification of the king's dream, although they could not satisfy their own minds about it. All that we can certainly affirm is, that God, by his overruling influence upon their minds, constrained them to acknowledge their ignorance. Had they undertaken to foretell from the

9 ¶ Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day :

10 Pharaoh was <sup>d</sup> wroth with his servants, <sup>e</sup> and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, *both* me, and the chief baker :

11 And <sup>f</sup> we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he : we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

d ch. 40. 2, 3. e ch. 39. 20. f ch. 40. 5.

dream what was to happen, the event might have made them liars, and it might appear wiser to confess their ignorance for once, than to undergo the risk of confutation from facts which would have covered their pretended art with perpetual infamy. Even liars, if not infatuated, will be cautious to avoid those falsehoods which may soon be detected.

9. *I do remember my faults this day.* At length the butler is reminded that there is such a person in existence as Joseph. When he thinks he may advance his own credit with the king, by commending his comforter, he faithfully relates what he knew to his advantage. His delay, however, takes away in great measure the credit of his benefaction. 'I remember my faults this day;' that is, the offences for which he had been imprisoned, and of which for the sake of conciliating favor, he now declares himself guilty, and not so much the 'fault' of having so long neglected the request of Joseph. He ought indeed to have remembered his fault against Joseph and against God, whose goodness he concealed when he ought to have published it. But this fault seems to have made little or no impression on his mind. His former faults he acknowledged in deference to the king. If he had not confessed that

12 And *there was* there with us a young man, an Hebrew, <sup>g</sup> servant to the captain of the guard ; and we told him, and he <sup>h</sup> interpreted to us our dreams : to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

13 And it came to pass, <sup>i</sup> as he interpreted to us, so it was : me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

g ch. 37. 36. h ch. 40. 12, &c. i ch. 40. 22.

he was guilty of that crime which was the cause of his imprisonment, he would have seemed to call in question the king's justice in imprisoning and his mercy in sparing him. He therefore makes this acknowledgment frankly, and thereby teaches us, when we mention our chastisements, to confess those sins by which we have deserved them.

13. *Me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.* This is understood by many commentators of Pharaoh, but we think it much more correctly referred to Joseph. It is exceedingly common for the Scriptures to speak of things as if done by those persons who merely say that they are or shall be done. Thus Rev. 11. 5, 'If any man will hurt them (the two witnesses) fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies, and they have power to shut heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy.' See this phraseology more fully illustrated in the Note on Gen. 27. 37. The chief butler now told Pharaoh what he ought to have told him two years before. Yet if he had then given the account which he now gave of Joseph, the event might have been very different. The king might have taken him out of prison, but not to reign. He might have been numbered with the

14 ¶ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon :

k Ps. 105. 20. l Dan. 2. 25. m 1 Sam. 2. 8. Ps. 113. 7, 8.

other wise men of Egypt, who were reputed skilful magicians or interpreters of dreams. Perhaps he might have been called upon to interpret Pharaoh's dreams in preference to any of them, and yet his real superiority to them not be discovered ; for they might pretend that they could have interpreted the dream as well as the young Hebrew, if Pharaoh had given them the opportunity. Whereas as matters stood, they were under the necessity of confessing that Joseph and Joseph's God were above them.

14. *They brought him hastily out of the dungeon.* Heb. יררצו *yeritzu-hu*, caused him to run. Neither the hatred of an imperious mistress, nor the wrath or policy of Potiphar could detain Joseph in prison, when the time came that the word of the Lord had sufficiently tried him in that sore affliction. And now that time was come—the time when the patience of the pious youth was to be abundantly rewarded, and his sorrows and perplexities to give place to joy and praise. Many and many a time during the course of two years had he wondered why the God of his fathers and his own God had left him so long a prisoner, but the day had at length arrived when this part of the mystery of providence was to be cleared up ; when he was to forget his misery, or remember it only as waters that pass away. 'What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter,' said Jesus to Peter. 'Often are believers in God filled with amazement at those dispensations of providence which they will one day call back to their minds with won-

der and thanksgiving. The cause of the haste with which Joseph was brought out of prison, was probably not only the desire to relieve the king as speedily as possible from his anxiety, but also a lively interest in the fate of Joseph, whose character was no doubt by this time generally known and appreciated. It is probable that the word 'dungeon' in this place is not to be strictly understood ; for Joseph being charged with the oversight of the other prisoners seems sometime before this to have been set free from the horrors of that close confinement in the dungeon of the prison, to which he was first doomed by the rage of his master. His situation, however, till this time had been very unpleasant. He was not suffered to leave the walls of his prison ; and his person bore upon it the usual badges of deep affliction. It is said of Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 19. 24, that he had not washed his clothes, nor washed his feet, nor trimmed his beard from the time that David left Jerusalem, because of Absalom, till he returned again in peace to his house. By these signs of grief he expressed his concern for the afflictions of his royal benefactor. By like signs Joseph expressed his humiliation of spirit under those afflictions which divine providence had laid upon him. But now when called before the king, he laid aside his mourning apparel, and shaved himself, that he might appear with decency and due respect in the royal presence. Doubtless when he exchanged his prison-garments for such as were worn in king's palaces, his heart rejoiced less in the change of his circumstances, than in

15 And Pharaoh said unto Jo-

seph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is* none that can interpret it: <sup>n</sup> and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

n verse 12. Ps. 25. 14. Dan. 5. 16.

the favour of God who had 'put off his sackcloth and girded him with gladness to the end that his glory might sing praise to the Lord.'

15. *I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it.* When Nebuchadnezzar heard that his wise men could not tell him the dream which he had forgotten, he issued orders to put them all to death, without inquiring whether any other man could be found, who could do what the magicians could not. The king of Egypt behaved very differently. He did not talk of putting the magicians to death. All that he did against them was, to publish their incapacity to perform what they were understood to profess, and to seek that information elsewhere which they confessed themselves unable to give. Joseph had now an opportunity which he did not suffer to pass unimproved, of shewing forth the superiority of his own God to the gods of Egypt and of pouring contempt upon the boasted wisdom of the magicians.—¶ *Thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.* Heb. תשמע חלום לפתור *tishma halom liphtor otho, thou wilt hear a dream to interpret it.* 'Hear' in the sense of 'understand' is of very common occurrence in the Hebrew. See Note on Gen. 11. 7.

16. *It is not in me.* Heb. בלעדאי *biladai, without me*; i. e. it does not pertain to me. Gr. 'Without God welfare shall not be answered to Pharaoh.' Chal. 'Not from my wisdom, but from before the Lord shall welfare be answered to Pharaoh.' Vulg. 'With-

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ° *It is* not in me: p God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

o Dan. 2. 30. Acts 3. 12. 2 Cor. 3. 5. p ch. 40. 8. Dan. 2. 22, 23, 47. & 4. 2.

out me shall God answer prosperous things to Pharaoh.' Arab. 'Without my knowledge God shall answer,' &c. The self-renouncing spirit of this reply is very remarkable. Like Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar, he expressly disclaims all ability of himself to unfold the secret counsels of heaven, or exercise that wisdom for which Pharaoh seems very willing to give him credit. The same humility has been in every age a distinguishing ornament of all God's faithful servants. Never were their hearts haughty, or their eyes lofty, nor did they deal in matters too high for them. Whatever gifts or graces they possessed, they have always been prompt to refer to the free and sovereign bestowment of the Most High. No man is fit to declare the counsels of God, who is not deeply sensible of his own unfitness without receiving light and help from above. Joseph, though conscious that it was not in himself to interpret the king's dream, yet was fully persuaded that God by him would satisfy his demands, and his words are expressive of his wishes and expectations. Pharaoh was disquieted from the apprehension of some evil portent in the dream. Joseph hoped there was no ground for his apprehensions. He had reason to believe that the dream was sent to Pharaoh in mercy to him as well as to himself, and therefore before knowing what the dream was, he soothes the mind of Pharaoh by giving him hope that he would not find the interpretation so unpleasant as he feared it might be. The interpreters of God's mind must, like

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

18 And behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed, and well-favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

19 And behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor, and very ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

20 And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they

were still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

22 And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

23 And behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and 'I told *this* unto the magicians; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.

25 ¶ And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh *is* one: 'God hath shewed Pharaoh what he *is* about to do.

q ver. 1.

r ver. 8. Dan. 4. 7. s Dan. 2. 28, 29, 45. Rev. 4. 1.

Micaiah, 1 Kings, 22. 14, say nothing to please man, without warrant from God; yet they will be glad when they can give comfort to the disquieted. Messages of peace, and not of evil, are always productive of most pleasure to themselves.

17—24. *And Pharaoh said, &c.* So firm was the hold which the dream had taken upon Pharaoh's mind that he had accurately retained it in all its minutest particulars. The language in which he describes the unsightly appearance of the ill-favored kine is stronger than that which Moses had used in giving an account of the dream at the beginning of the chapter. In the present recital he says, what he had not mentioned before, that their appearance had not at all altered for the better, after they had eaten up the well-favored kine. 'And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them.' Heb. 'And when they (the eaten) came into the inward parts of them (the eaters), it could not be known,' &c. Chal. 'And it was not

known that they had entered into their bowels.' This signified that notwithstanding the gathered abundance of the years of plenty, yet it should be so far from affording a competent supply for all the subsequent years, that it should all be consumed, and still leave the people in a destitute and famishing condition; so much so that it could be hardly realized that they had been so liberally furnished. It was happy for Pharaoh and for Egypt, that the magicians confessed their incapacity to interpret this dream. Had they pretended to give some meaning to it out of the imagination of their own hearts, it is probable that he would have rested satisfied with it and sought no farther. Consequently when the seven years of plenty came, the abundance might have been spent in dissipation, and no provision made against the long and terrible famine. But when he was convinced that the mind of God was not with the magicians, he was forced to seek for light where he could find it.

25. *The dream of Pharaoh is one.*

26 The seven good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are* seven years: the dream *is* one.

27 And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them *are* seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be *seven* years of famine.

28 *This is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: what

t 2 Kings 8. 1. v ver. 25.

God *is* about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come *seven* years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall *arise* after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine *shall* consume the land:

x ver. 47. y ver. 54. z ch. 47. 13.

That is, one in scope, drift, design; though two-fold in visionary representation.—¶ *God hath shewed Pharaoh.* The first thing to be considered about the dream was, whether it had any meaning, or was a mere illusion of the brain, like a thousand other wanderings of fancy in the time of sleep, which pass through the mind and are forgotten when one awakes. Pharaoh was already himself firmly persuaded that his dream had an important meaning, and Joseph assures him that he was not mistaken. He no doubt felt happy in seizing this opportunity to speak of his own God, the Ruler of the world, to Pharaoh, and particularly to proclaim his providence and foreknowledge. He knew that events would soon confirm his words, and that Pharaoh's mind was already prepared to receive it. It was certainly a point of infinite importance, when different gods were worshipped by different nations of the world, to know what proofs of godhead any of them had given. The God who governs the world, and who is able to foretell what is to happen hereafter, must be the true God. And if any man can make known those future events which depend on the sovereign pleasure of God, he must derive his information from God himself.

When Joseph, therefore, professes to declare from God himself what he was about to do, and when every thing happened according to his predictions, it was undeniably evident that the God whom Joseph worshipped was the Ruler of the universe, and that Joseph received from him that wisdom in which he so far excelled all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Thus the true God left not himself without a witness in the most famous kingdom of the world, at a time when the grossest darkness enveloped most of the Gentile nations.

28. *This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh, &c.* Joseph again tells Pharaoh that God was both the revealer and the doer of those things that were pre-signified by the dreams. We need often to be put in mind that God is both the speaker of his word and the doer of his works. Had Pharaoh heard Joseph interpret his dream without remembering that God revealed his intentions by him, he would not have made the proper improvement of what was said to him. He was disposed to believe what was said, but he would have given that praise to Joseph which was due to God. We can never make the proper use of what befalls us, or what we see around us, unless we



31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following: for it *shall* be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was

doubled unto Pharaoh twice; *it is* because the *thing is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

a Num. 23. 19. Isa. 46. 10, 11.

remember that all things are under the direction of a supreme intelligence, which is working its own wise and gracious purposes in the midst of human agencies and events.

29, 30. *Behold there come, &c.* In Egypt plenty or scarcity were supposed to depend upon the river Nile. When, in the season of its inundation, it rose only twelve cubits, a famine was the consequence; scarcity, if it rose only thirteen; a competency, if it rose fourteen or fifteen; great plenty, if it rose still higher. The Egyptians idolized their river, as if it could have afforded them a plentiful crop without the agency of God. They alleged that other nations might perish with hunger, if their gods should forget to send them rain; whereas *they* were not dependent upon such a contingency. From Pharaoh's dream, compared with the accomplishment, it was plain that Egypt depended as much as other countries upon God. The seven years of great plenty were to be the fulfilment of the word of God, and the work of his providence. All the waters of the river were his, as well as the rains of heaven.—¶ *The famine shall consume the land.* That is, as rightly paraphrased by the Chal., 'shall consume the people of the land.' In like manner v. 36, Joseph recommends that food be laid up in store, 'that the land perish not through the famine;' i. e. the people of the land. See also Note on Gen. 47. 13.

31. *It shall be very grievous.* Heb. כָּבֵד כָּבֵד *kabed kabed*, very heavy. There was ordinarily less fear of a famine in Egypt than in any other country

under heaven. When there was famine in Canaan in the days of Abraham, there was plenty in Egypt; and so established was its character in this respect, that it was frequently called the *granary of the world*. Yet Joseph here foretells that there should not only be a grievous famine in Egypt, but a famine so terrible that all the luxuriant plenty of the former fruitful years should be forgotten as if it never were; and it was to continue, not for one or two, but for seven years! What prospect could be more dreadful? What event could afford more demonstrative evidence of the outstretched hand of omnipotence?

32. *And for that the dream was doubled, &c.—it is because the thing is established by God.* Heb. נִכּוֹן הָרֶבֶר *nakon haddabar*, the word is firmly prepared. It was repeated in order to intimate its absolute certainty and its speedy accomplishment. The passage affords us a general hint as to the reason of things being occasionally repeated in the Scriptures. It is for the sake of greater assurance. When God speaks but once, he certainly deserves credit, for he cannot lie; but knowing how slow of heart we are to believe, he often repeats the same important truths. While therefore it is impious to disbelieve any of his words, it is more than double impiety to disbelieve him when he speaks not once but twice. What excuse then can be made for our conduct, if we refuse to believe when he speaks not once or twice, but a hundred and a thousand times? Would not Pharaoh have been inexcusable, if he had disbelieved or disregarded

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do *this*, and

let him appoint officers over the land, and <sup>b</sup> take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

b Prov. 6, 6, 7, 8.

ed the double admonition given him in his sleep, when it was explained by Joseph? Will not our folly be a thousand times less capable of apology, if we disregard any of the admonitions of the Bible, so often sounded in our ears by the ministers of the word?

33. *Now therefore let Pharaoh look out, &c.* Having made the matter plain, and so relieved the king's mind, he does not conclude without offering a word of advice; the substance of which was, to provide from the surplus of the seven good years, for the supply of the seven succeeding ones. There is perhaps an appearance of impertinence in Joseph's giving his advice seemingly unasked. But the narrative is concise, and no doubt imperfect. It is natural to suppose that after hearing the interpretation of the dream, in respect to which no one of the counselors seems to have entertained any doubt, it would at once become a matter of grave consideration, what measures were proper to be taken in consequence of it. On this occasion Joseph probably proffered his advice. He had before said, 'God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace;' but if it had been impracticable to obviate the bad effects of a seven years' famine, the answer would have been a message of evil, and not of peace. Seven years of prosperity cannot compensate seven years of adversity, but by furnishing beforehand the means of averting the horrors of starvation. The good counsel which Joseph adds to the interpretation of the dream makes the answer of God an answer of peace and not of

evil. It may be justly questioned whether Pharaoh would have made any good improvement of his dreams, if Joseph had merely interpreted them, without speaking of the use that ought to be made of the divine discovery. God reveals nothing before it happens without some good end in view. The intention of prophecies concerning judgments to come, is to excite those threatened with them to take proper measures for averting them. The grand purpose of God in Pharaoh's dreams was not to gratify a vain curiosity about the future, but to procure deliverance and honor to Joseph, and to preserve Egypt, and the family of Jacob, and the countries around from destruction. Joseph's advice tended to secure this result.

34. *Let him appoint officers over the land.* Heb. פקידים *pekidim*, *visitors* or *overseers*. The original term פקיד *pakid* is in several instances rendered by the Gr. of the Sept., and thence transferred into the Gr. of the New Testament, ἐπισκοπος *overseer*, from which comes the Eng. word 'bishop,' its usual representative in the writings of the Apostles. This word has in some way become appropriated as a title of *ecclesiastical officers*, though the genuine import of the original is a *person charged with the oversight and management of any business whatever, whether sacred or civil*. Thus Num. 31. 14; 2 Kings 11. 16, 'Captains of the army,' is in the original 'Pakids,' or 'bishops of the army;' and 2 Chron. 34. 12, 17, 'Overseers of them that did the work,' is 'bishops of them that did the work.' If the translators of

35 And 'let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh; and let them keep food in the cities.

36 And that food shall be for

c ver. 48.

the Eng. Bible had not been warped by the circumstances in which they were placed, their usual fidelity to the original would doubtless have led them to render this word by its plain corresponding term 'overseers.' In like manner 'Ecclesia' would have been rendered 'congregation' or 'assembly' instead of 'church.' It is surely taking unwarrantable liberties with the oracles of God to affix in a version a *technical* character to words and phrases which are not thus marked in the original.—But we have more pleasure in remarks of another kind. When a famine was foreseen at the end of seven years of plenty, it was not enough for the royal mandate to forewarn the people that they should lay up a store of food against the calamitous period. Not one, perhaps, in ten, or in a hundred, would have made a proper use of the warning. Many would have turned into money the superfluous product of the year, to gratify their avarice, and left the days of famine to provide for themselves. The greater part would have abused the bounties of providence by spending them upon their lusts, and the whole nation must have been exposed to extreme misery, if the king had not taken effectual measures of prevention. To this purpose he was advised to choose a wise and able minister, who should employ officers under him, to collect a fifth part of the crop during all the years of plenty, to be reserved for the years of famine.—

¶ *Let him take up a fifth part of the land.* Heb. *למש את ארץ himmesh*

store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land <sup>d</sup>perish not through the famine.

d ch. 47. 15, 19.

*eth eretz, let him five or quinquate the land; as to tithe or decimate is to take a tenth part.* The meaning is, not to take a fifth part of the *land itself*, which would have been a gross oppression, but to purchase at a fair price *a fifth part of the produce of the soil*, to be sold again to the people during the years of scarcity. As they might be induced to sell to foreigners, probably the main end of the policy proposed was to secure the purchase of the fifth part of their surplus grain to the king, for the future benefit of the people, before they should have disposed of any portion of it to others.

35, 36. *Let them gather, &c.* The various admonitions in the Scriptures against an undue anxiety to lay up treasures on earth, are not intended to prohibit us from providing in a time of plenty for a time of scarcity, as far as it can be done without neglecting the necessary duties of charity and piety. It was well ordered by the providence of God, for the safety of the people, that the years of famine were *preceded* by the years of plenty. Had the seven years of famine come before the years of plenty, few men would have been left to enjoy them. But from the years of plenty a sufficiency could be reserved to maintain life with comfort during the years of death that succeeded. How great is the divine goodness that provides so liberally for man and beast, and which tempers those calamities that are allotted to mankind with such undeserved mercy, that even in days of famine, few perish with hunger. When

37 ¶ And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his  
e Ps. 105. 19. Acts 7. 10.

the earth does not bring forth her usual increase, he finds out means to mitigate or relieve the distress of his creatures, and especially of his own people.—

¶ *Lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh.* That is, i. e. let this be done in the name and under the authority of Pharaoh, and when collected let it be considered as a public store to be disposed of in the different districts by the king's officers appointed for that purpose. Chal. 'Under the hand of Pharaoh's officers.'—¶ *Let them keep food in the cities;* i. e. let them make depositories or granaries of food in the different cities, from whence it could be more conveniently distributed.

37. *And the thing was good, &c.* It is not always that the great men of the world will thank their inferiors for the proffer of their advice. They are backward to receive any thing from others which implies a deficiency of wisdom or any thing else in themselves. But Pharaoh was not too great or too infallible in his own esteem to take advice kindly from a poor prisoner, the slave of one of his servants. There is no man so wise as not to need counsel, but sometimes one wise counsellor is better than a thousand; and happy is he who can honor and avail himself of wise suggestions, come from what quarter they may. Some credit is undoubtedly due to Pharaoh and his servants on this occasion. It is a sign of great wisdom to be able to give the best counsel; but it is a sign of wisdom also to appreciate such counsel when given, and to be ready to follow it.

38. *And Pharaoh said unto his servants, &c.* The advice of Joseph was

servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man 'in whom the spirit of God *is*?

f Numb. 27. 18. Job 32. 8. Prov. 2. 6. Dan. 4. 8, 18. & 5. 11, 14. & 6. 3.

so evidently good, and the measures he proposed so plainly conducive to the public safety, that we do not wonder at Pharaoh's willingness to comply with it. But it is a matter of surprise to find Joseph himself proposed to be employed to execute his own counsel, and to hear the high commendations bestowed upon him by the king. It was only on that very day that he had been taken from a prison in which he had long been confined as an evil-doer. And yet now he is to be raised to the highest subordinate office in the kingdom, as a man that had not an equal in the earth, and in whom was the spirit of the holy God!—¶ *In whom the spirit of God is.* Chal. 'In whom is the spirit of prophecy from before the Lord.' Perhaps as Pharaoh was an idolater, and probably ignorant of the true God, a more correct rendering would be, 'In whom is the spirit of the gods.' This is paralleled by an expression in the similar history of Daniel, ch. 5. 14, 'I have even heard of thee that *the spirit of the gods* is in thee.' Also v. 11, 'There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is *the spirit of the holy gods*.' But it is not necessary for us to know what idea Pharaoh attached to his own words in this expression. It was plain to him that Joseph could not have discovered the import of the dreams by his own sagacity. He was sensible that a divine person or a divine influence had enlightened his mind and given him this extraordinary knowledge. His proposal therefore to honor Joseph was a virtual honoring of the God whom he served. His affairs, he was con-

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, *there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:*

vinced, would be most likely to prosper in the hands of a man whom God loved and taught.

39. *Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this.* We see in Joseph a striking illustration of the truth of the promise, 'Those that honor me, I will honor.' Joseph honoured God before Pharaoh, and God honored Joseph in the sight of Pharaoh. The king bestowed upon him the highest commendations and the highest honors. A little time ago he was traduced as one of the vilest of men. Now the king honors him as a man of incomparable worth. We may learn from this not to be greatly dejected by reproach, nor puffed up by praise. The best of men have passed through good report and evil report. There is no doubt that Joseph wore his honors as meekly as he had suffered his hardships patiently.—It is not unlikely that Joseph took this occasion to say much more on the being, power, and perfections of the true God, of his providence and the manner in which he was to be worshipped, than is here recorded. The Scripture narrative, studious of all possible brevity, often leaves many things to be supplied by fair inference that are not expressly stated. See on Gen. 24. 10. So in this very connexion, though Pharaoh appealed directly to his courtiers on the propriety of appointing Joseph to the main charge of public affairs, nothing is said of their reply. Yet as the measure went into effect, who can doubt that they assented to it and expressed their assent? At the same time it is very possible that nothing is

40 \* Thou shalt be over mine house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

g Ps. 105. 21, 22. Acts 7. 10.

said of their reply, because they were in fact a little jealous of the young foreigner, and came into the proposal with rather a bad grace. Such we learn were the feelings of the Babylonish nobles towards Daniel on a somewhat similar occasion. See Dan. 6.

40. *Thou shalt be over mine house, &c.* The Psalmist in speaking of Joseph's elevation, Ps. 105. 21, 22, says, 'He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.' In receiving this dignity, he was the first to reap the fruit of those wise instructions which he had given to Pharaoh. Men are usually disposed to put honor upon those by whom, under God, they are made wiser and better.—¶ *According unto thy word shall all my people be ruled.* Heb. על פיך ירשק כל עמי *al pika yishak kol ammi, at thy mouth shall all my people kiss.* At thy word or command they shall kiss their hand in token of reverence, submission, and obedience. Thus, Job 31. 27, 'If mine heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed mine hand;' i. e. as a mark of worship or adoration. Consult also 1 Sam. 10. 1; 1 Kings 19. 18; Ps. 2. 12. Gr. 'At thymouth shall all my people obey.' Chal. 'At thy command shall all my people be governed.' 'In Ps. 2. 12, it is written, 'Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.' Bishop Patrick says on this, 'Kiss the son; that is, submit to him, and obey him.' Bishop Pococke says, 'The Egyptians, on taking any thing from the hand of a superior,

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have <sup>h</sup> set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh <sup>i</sup> took off his ring from his hand, and put it

<sup>h</sup> Dan. 6. 3. <sup>i</sup> Esth. 3. 10. & 8. 2, 8.

or that is sent from him, kiss it; and as the highest respect, put it to their foreheads.' It is therefore probable that Pharaoh meant, that all should *submit* to Joseph, that all should obey him, and pay him reverence, and that only on the throne he himself would be greater. When a great man causes a gift to be handed to an inferior, the latter will take it, and put it on the right cheek, so as to cover the eyes; then on the left; after which he will kiss it. This is done to show the great superiority of the donor, and that he on whom the gift is bestowed is his dependant, and greatly reverences him. When a man of rank is angry with an inferior, the latter will be advised to go and kiss his feet, which he does by touching his feet with his hands, and then kissing them. When the Mohammedans meet each other after a long absence, the inferior will touch the hand of the superior, and then kiss it. All then were to *kiss* Joseph, and acknowledge him as their ruler.' *Roberts*. — ¶ *Only in the throne will I be greater than thou*. Thou shalt have no superior but myself only. Pharaoh did not probably say this because he thought it necessary to put Joseph in mind of his inferiority to himself. His design was not so much to caution Joseph against aspiring to an equality with himself, as to authorize him to claim a superiority to every other subject, however noble in birth or high in office.

41. *I have set thee over, &c.* Heb. נָתַתִּי *nathatti*, *I have given*; i. e. constituted, fixed, established. See Note on Gen. 1. 17. The suddenness of Jo-

seph's advancement is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the whole history. We can indeed see that it was on the whole very wisely ordered in providence that Pharaoh should invest his servant with the power of government, as soon as he had formed the resolution. If a few days or weeks had been suffered to elapse the king might have found it less easy to execute his intentions. His other officers might, on reflection, have felt piqued at Joseph's being raised over their heads to office, and endeavored to prevent it. But apart from this, such sudden mutations of fortune are not unusual in the East. There the distribution of public honors is not made in the same slow and tedious manner as with us. In consequence of all the power depending on the will of a single individual, the wheel of fortune often revolves with such rapid movement, that he who is lowest to-day may be uppermost to-morrow. And so little does meanness of condition prove an obstacle to the rise of the man whom the king intends to honor, that many of the greatest officers who have figured in Oriental history, once bore the name and character of slaves. Maillet, in his letters on Egypt, mentions that when he was in that country, there was an eunuch who had raised one of his slaves to the rank of prince; and Niebuhr relates the case of another, who had raised so many of his creatures to places of power, that of the eighteen beys who in his time ruled over Egypt, eight had been his slaves; and of the seven agas or lieutenants of

<sup>k</sup> Esth. 8. 15. <sup>l</sup> Dan. 5. 7, 29.

the great body of militia, five had once belonged to his household.

42. *Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, &c.* 'This was, no doubt, a principal circumstance in Joseph's investiture in the high office of chief minister to the king of Egypt. Investiture by a ring is not unknown in the history of Europe during the middle ages. But the present ring was undoubtedly a signet, or seal-ring, which gave validity to the documents to which it was affixed, and by the delivery of which, therefore, Pharaoh delegated to Joseph the chief authority in the state. The king of Persia in the same way gave his seal-ring to his successive ministers Haman and Mordecai; and in Esther 8. 8, the use of such a ring is expressly declared: 'The writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.' The possession of such a ring therefore gave absolute power in all things to the person to whom it was entrusted. This may in some degree be understood by the use of a seal among ourselves to convey validity to a legal instrument or public document; and still more perhaps by the use of the Great Seal, the person who holds which is, at least nominally, the second person in the state. But our usages do not perfectly illustrate the use of the seal as it exists in the East, because we require the signature in addition to the seal; whereas in the East, the seal *alone* has the effect which we give to *both* the seal and the signature. People in the East do not sign their names. They have seals in which their names and titles are engraven, and with which they make an impression with thick ink on all occasions for which we use the signature. To give a man your seal, is therefore to give him the use of that authority and power which your own signature possesses. This explains the extraordinary anxiety

about seals which is exhibited in the laws and usages of the East. It explains Judah's anxiety about the signet which he had pledged to Tamar, (ch. 38,) and it explains the force of the present act of Pharaoh. In Egypt, the crime of counterfeiting a seal was punished with the loss of both hands. In Persia, at the present day, letters are seldom written, and never signed by the person who sends them; and it will thus appear that the authenticity of all orders and communications, and even of a merchant's bills, depends wholly on the seal. This makes the occupation of a seal-cutter one of as much trust and danger as it seems to have been in Egypt. Such a person is obliged to keep a register of every seal he makes, and if one be lost, or stolen from the party for whom it was cut, his life would answer for making another exactly like it. The loss of a seal is considered a very serious calamity; and the alarm which an Oriental exhibits when his seal is missing can only be understood by a reference to these circumstances. As the seal-cutter is always obliged to annex the real date at which the seal was cut, the only resource of a person who has lost his seal is to have another made with a new date, and to write to his correspondents, to inform them that all accounts, contracts, and communications to which his former seal is affixed, are null from the day on which it was lost. That the ring, in this case, was a signet appears from other passages, which describe it as used for the purpose of sealing. It would seem that most of the ancient seals were rings; but they were not always finger-rings, being often worn as bracelets on the arm. Indeed, it is observable, that no where in the Bible is a signet expressly said to be worn on the *finger*, but on the hand, as in the present text; and although this may denote the finger, we

may understand it literally, as of a ring worn on the wrist. Finger seal-rings are now, however, more usual than bracelets; and very often seals are not used as rings at all, but are carried in a small bag in the bosom of a person's dress, or suspended from his neck by a silken cord. They are and were, whether rings or otherwise, made of gold or silver, or even inferior metals, such as brass. But an inscribed stone is frequently set in the metal; and that this custom was very ancient appears from Exod. 28. 11, and other places, where we read of 'engraving in stone like the engraving of a signet.' The intelligent editor of Calmet (Mr. C. Taylor) is mistaken in his explanation that such seals, used as *stamps-manual* to impress a name with ink upon paper, must have the characters *raised*, as in our printing and wood-engraving, and not *indented* as in our seals. The fact is, that they are cut in the same fashion as our seals; and the thick ink being lightly daubed with the finger over the surface, the seal is pressed upon the paper, where it leaves a black impression, in which the characters are left white or blank.' *Pict. Bible*.



SEAL RINGS.

— *Vestures of fine linen.* Heb. בגדי שש *bigde shesh*. Gr. στολην βυσσινη *stole or robe of bysse*. This 'shesh' or 'bysses' was a cloth made either of silk or of the most beautiful and delicate species of cotton, such as was employed in the finest fabrics of the loom. The garments to which the term 'bys-

se' is applied, were long robes of the most exquisite white, and worn by priests and kings as a badge of the royal and sacerdotal office. 'This also was probably part of the investiture of Joseph in his high office. A dress of honor still in the East accompanies promotion in the royal service; and otherwise forms the ordinary medium through which princes and great persons manifest their favor and esteem. In Persia, where perhaps the fullest effect is in our own time given to this usage, the king has always a large wardrobe from which he bestows dresses to his own subjects or foreign ambassadors whom he desires to honor. These dresses are called 'Kelaats;' and the reception of them forms a distinction, which is desired with an earnestness, and received with an exultation only comparable to that which accompanies titular distinctions or insignia of knighthood in Europe. They form the principal criterion through which the public judge of the degree of influence which the persons who receive them enjoy at court, and therefore the parties about to be thus honored exhibit the utmost anxiety that the *kelaat* may, in all its circumstances, be in the highest degree indicative of the royal favor. It varies in the number and quality of the articles which compose it, according to the rank of the person to whom it is given, or the degree of honor intended to be afforded; and all these matters are examined and discussed by the public with a great degree of earnestness. Besides the robes occasionally bestowed by the king and princes, the former regularly sends a *kelaat*, once a year, to the governors of provinces, who are generally royal princes. At the distance of every few miles from every provincial capital, there is usually a town or village called 'Kelaat,' which name it derives from its being the appointed place to which



43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had: <sup>m</sup> and they cried before him,

m Esth. 6. 9.

Bow the knee: and he made him ruler <sup>n</sup> over all the land of Egypt.

n ch. 42. 6. & 45. 8, 26. Acts 7. 10.

the governor proceeds in great state from his city, attended by great part of its population, to be invested with the dress of honor thus sent him from the king. The occasion is attended with great rejoicings; and is of so much importance, that it is postponed until the arrival of what the astrologers decide to be a propitious day, and even the favorable moment for investiture is determined by the same authorities. A common Persian *kelaat* consists of a vesture of fine stuff, perhaps brocade; a sash or girdle for the waist, and a shawl for the head; and when it is intended to be more distinguishing, a sword or dagger is added. Robes of rich furs are given to persons of distinction. A *kelaat* of the very richest description, consists, besides the dress, of the same articles which Xenophon describes as being given by the ancient princes of Persia, namely:—a horse with a golden bridle, a chain of gold, (as in this *kelaat* which Pharaoh gave to Joseph,) and a golden sword—that is, a sword, with a scabbard ornamented with gold. The chain of gold now given is, however, part of the furniture of the horse, and hangs over his nose. Joseph's chain of gold was, however, a personal ornament: it had thus early become a mark of official distinction, and remains such to this day among different nations. It is also observable that Xenophon mentions bracelets among the articles in the ancient Persian *kelaat*. Bracelets are not now worn by Persians, and are therefore not given; but we have already intimated that the 'ring,' mentioned in the preceding text, may be understood as

well to signify a bracelet as a finger-ring.' *Pict. Bible.*

43. *Bow the knee.* Heb. אֲבֹרֶךְ *abrek*; a word of which the meaning is doubtful. The Chal. renders it, 'This is the father of the king;' from 'Ab,' *father*, and 'Rek,' *king*, equivalent to the Latin 'Rex;' in accordance with which we see that Joseph himself subsequently declares, Gen. 45. 8, that 'God had made him a *father* to Pharaoh.' The Jerus. Targ. in like manner paraphrases it, 'God save the *father of the king*, the master of wisdom and tender in years.' Others, however, on very plausible grounds suppose it to be the Egyptian form of a word originally Hebrew, viz: 'Habrak,' signifying to *kneel down*. Indeed Wilkinson remarks that it is the word used at the present day by the Arabs when requiring a camel to kneel down and receive its load. So an Egyptian name is given to Joseph, v. 4, 5. The Egyptian dialect seems to have resembled the Chaldee in making use of the letter א *a* (e) for ה *h* as in Is. 63. 3, we have אֶגְלִיזִי *egalti* for הִגְלִיזִי *higalti*, by Chaldaism. The Gr. omits it, giving simply, 'And a crier cried before him.' Happily the moral reflections to which the incident gives rise do not depend upon an accurate knowledge of the meaning of the term. In our ignorance of that we can still feel, that the constant changes taking place in the world are an admonition not to set our affections on things below. If we are great and rich and admired by all to-day, we know not what a sad reverse may take place to-morrow; and we know certainly that all those things

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, *I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.*

45 And Pharaoh called Jo-

séph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On: and Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

on which the lovers of the present world value themselves, will soon come to an end. But there are pleasant as well as afflictive changes. The man who at present wears rags may one day be clothed in sumptuous apparel. But let us not forget that a change of infinitely greater moment in the state of the soul passes upon all the redeemed of the Lord. Our natural condition under the power of sin, is incomparably more wretched than that of Joseph when the iron entered his soul. The garments of praise and salvation with which every believer in Jesus is arrayed, infinitely excel in beauty those perishing ornaments with which the kings of the East were accustomed to deck their favorites. When Christ gives liberty to the captives he bestows upon them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But it is only at the resurrection that the contrast between our native character and condition and that which is wrought in virtue of Christ's atonement, shines forth in its full relief. Joseph doubtless felt heartfelt lively emotions of gratitude to Pharaoh, when his prison-garments were exchanged for royal vestments. But at that blissful period 'we shall greatly rejoice in the Lord, our souls shall be joyful in our God; for he hath clothed us with the garments of salvation, he hath covered with the robes of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorneth himself with ornaments, and as a bride decketh herself with her jewels.'

44. *Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.* A proverbial mode of expres-

sion conveying to Joseph the grant of the most extensive power and authority as a minister of Pharaoh. It seems to be spoken in reply to some expressed reluctance on the part of Joseph to accept of all that honor and power which the king wished to confer. He might fear that the royal favor would expose him to envy, and perhaps the king to reproach. But here Pharaoh virtuously assures him that his authority shall be submitted to universally by all classes of men and in all kinds of relations, small as well as great. He that resisted the authority of Joseph virtually resisted the authority of Pharaoh. It would avail no one any thing to say that he would not degrade himself to be the subject of an upstart slave. Let him be called by what name he would, still he was invested by Pharaoh with his own authority. The ring from his finger, the robes of state conferred on him, the proclamation to bow the knee before him, were public testimonies of the fact. Why then should he be afraid or unwilling to enter upon his new office?

45. *Called his name Zaphnath-paaneah.* We have already had occasion to remark Gen. 17. 5, that it was not unusual in ancient times to give new names to persons on particular occasions. This was often done to indicate their coming under new masters, as 2 Kings 23. 34. 2 Chron. 36. 4. Daniel 1. 7; but in the present case it was altogether honorary, and designed as a token of the high esteem in which he was held by the king, and a just expression of the great obligations under which he had laid the whole nation. The term

itself is probably Egyptian, like 'Abrek' in a preceding verse, and is of equally doubtful import. It is usually understood to mean 'revealer of secrets' on the authority of most of the ancient versions, though Jerome refers it to a Coptic origin and renders 'savior or deliverer of the world.' Farther researches into these ancient languages, which are now going on among the learned in Europe, may perhaps eventually make us acquainted with its true sense.—¶ *Gave him to wife Asenath, &c.* We know nothing more than we are here told of Asenath, or of Poti-pherah her father. But it is plain that Pharaoh intended by this connexion to honor Joseph and to strengthen his interest among the important families in the kingdom. We are not warranted in condemning the step on the part of Joseph, because we know not how far religion had at this time degenerated in Egypt. Jethro's daughter was not rejected by Moses because Jethro was priest of Midian. If Poti-pherah was as bad as heathen priests often were, his daughter might, nevertheless, be a woman well disposed to receive the truth from Joseph. We have no evidence that she was a worse woman than Joseph's own mother, who was not free from a tincture of idolatry, at least when she came with Jacob from Mesopotamia. Suppose Joseph to have married a wife trained up in superstition and idolatry, when it was not perhaps in his power to have obtained a better, his example will be no excuse to those Christians who yoke themselves with infidel or graceless women when there is no necessity for it. We have reason to believe that one who so habitually acknowledged God in all his ways, did not neglect to acknowledge him in a matter of so much importance as the present; and why may not God have seen fit in his sovereign pleasure to bestow Joseph upon Asenath as the

means of bringing her to the knowledge of himself? But although we are not particularly solicitous to free Joseph from the imputation of a fault which there is no evidence of his having committed, yet it may not be amiss to present the reader with the very plausible hypothesis of Mr. Sharon Turner in his 'Sacred History of the World.' We give it in his own words: 'In ancient days, we learn from Juba, the African prince and historian, that the Arabs peopled part of Egypt from Meroe to Syene, and built the city of the Sun. Pliny has preserved this remarkable but little noticed fact: 'Juba says that the city of the Sun, which was not far from Memphis in Egypt, has had the Arabs for its founders; and that the inhabitants of the Nile, from Syene up to Meroe, are not Ethiopian people, but Arabs.' (Pliny, l. vi., c. 34.) He says of this Juba, as noting his good authority, 'In this part it pleases us to follow the Roman arms and king Juba, in his volumes written to Caius Cæsar, of the same Arabian expedition.' This important passage of Juba bears, I think, upon the history of Joseph, and explains why he married the daughter of a priest at Heliopolis or On. Being an Arabian colony, it would not have then in it the base superstitions of Egypt, but would have, at that period, retained enough of the Abrahamic or patriarchal religion to make a female there more near to his own faith and feelings than any other part of Egypt.'—¶ *Priest of On;* or, Heb. 'Prince of On;' which the import of the original כֹּהֵן *kohen* will admit. The priests of Egypt really constituted the grandees or nobility of the kingdom. On was called also 'Aven,' Ezek 30. 17, and was one of the oldest cities in the world, situated in the land of Goshen, on the east side of the Nile, about five miles above modern Cairo. It was called by the Greeks

46 ¶ And Joseph *was* thirty years old when he <sup>o</sup> stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt: and Joseph went out from the presence

o 1 Sam. 16. 21. 1 Kings 12. 6, 8. Dan. 1. 19.

'Heliopolis,' i. e. *city of the sun*, and by the Hebrews 'Beth Shemesh;' i. e. *house of the sun*, Jer. 43. 13. Eighteen centuries ago this city was in ruins when visited by Strabo. At present, almost the only monument of its former grandeur is a column of granite seventy feet high, and covered with hieroglyphics, of which a particular description is given by Dr. Clarke. Josephus says this city being in the land of Goshen was given to the family of Jacob, when they first came to sojourn in Egypt.—¶ *Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.* A brief mention of the incident more fully detailed in the next verse.

46. *And Joseph was thirty years old, &c.* As he was seventeen years of age when he was sold into slavery, thirteen years of course were spent in that afflictive condition, of which probably three at least were passed in the walls of a prison. He no doubt had cherished the hope of being much sooner delivered from his troubles and restored to the arms of his affectionate father. But it was happy for him that he did not know beforehand when God would be pleased to give him the expected end of his sorrows. Thirteen years of suffering would have been fearful in prospect. But the retrospect was pleasant, when there was no dread of their return. The remembrance of grief turned into joy gives a rich compensation for its bitterness. Though light is always pleasant, it is doubly so after darkness. He was now raised to a place of rank and distinction. He had the honor of stand-

ing before the king; yet it was a greater honor to him that he gave to the king every reason to be satisfied with his conduct. Considering his age and the condition from which he had been raised, it would not have been unnatural that he should have shewn some of the effects which sudden elevations are apt to produce. But he who enabled him to repel temptation and to endure affliction, enabled him also to bear the glory that was conferred upon him with humility. He made no sinecure of his office, nor did he spend his days in pleasure, receiving the compliments of the friends whom his prosperity procured. He was, and he felt himself to be, exalted to power for the good and the safety of the people, and he entered at once upon the active discharge of the duties of his station. He went through all the land of Egypt, not to shew his greatness, but to see with his own eyes what was to be done, to issue the proper orders, and to see their execution. If the kindness of his former master had been a powerful motive with him to resist the solicitations of his abandoned mistress, the still greater favors received from Pharaoh were a sufficient motive, if he needed a motive, to the most unwearied activity and diligence in securing the country against the evils of the threatened famine.

47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

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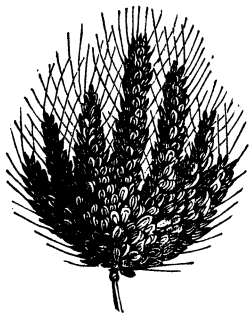
47. *The earth brought forth by handfuls.* That is, in vast abundance; one kernel yielding a whole handful, or each stalk producing as much corn as, popularly speaking, the hand *could* grasp. This, or even more *than this*

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number.

p. ch. 22. 17. Judges 7. 12. 1 Sam. 13. 5. Ps. 78. 27.

productiveness, is not at this day unusual in Egypt. Mr. Jowett, in his 'Christian Researches,' states that when in Egypt he plucked up a few stalks out of the cornfields. 'We counted the number of stalks which sprouted from single grains of seed, carefully pulling to pieces each root, in order to see that it was one plant. The first had seven stalks; the next three; then eighteen; then fourteen. Each stalk would bear an ear.' The annexed cut represents a species of wheat which now actually grows in Egypt.



EGYPTIAN WHEAT.

48. And he gathered up all the food, &c. The report of Pharaoh's dream,

50 'And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came: which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh; For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

q ch. 46. 20. & 48. 5.

and of the interpretation, must have spread through all the land of Egypt, with the account of Joseph's advancement; and many of the people would undoubtedly see that it was for their interest to be frugal and provident, and would act accordingly. But as the years of plenty would not soon come to an end, many would no doubt think it unnecessary to be in haste to make provision for days of famine that were yet at a considerable distance. Of this Joseph was well aware. He foresaw that a great part of the inhabitants of the land must perish, unless he prevented the danger by his own care. Accordingly he gathered up all the food of the seven years, and laid it in the cities which he made depots for the surrounding country. He left great abundance for present use. That which was laid up was the fifth part, according to his own suggestion and the royal mandate; and this was laid up and carefully preserved in the store-houses which he had caused to be prepared for its reception.

50, 51. *Unto Joseph were born two sons, &c.* These sons, as is usual in the Scriptures, are significantly named, the names being expressive of the state of his mind in his present situation. We commonly look no farther than the instruments employed by provi

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be <sup>r</sup>fruitful in the land of my affliction.

53 ¶ And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

r ch. 49. 22.

dence in conferring benefits or inflicting evils upon us. But Joseph saw that all his adversities and all his prosperity came from God. He was grateful to Pharaoh, but he was grateful chiefly to God, for the happy change in his condition. God had made him to forget all his toil, and his father's house, and therefore he named his first son *Manasseh*, which signifies *forgetting* or *making to forget*. He did not mean by this, however, that his remembrance of his toil was obliterated from his mind. His mention of it when he gave the name to his son, was a proof that in one sense he still remembered it. It was in fact his duty to remember it. How could he have retained just impressions of the divine goodness, if he had forgotten the evils from which he was delivered? But in another sense he forgot his misery. He did not so cherish the recollection as to allow it to embitter his present enjoyment. The memory of his troubles was comparatively lost in the happiness by which they were succeeded. So also of what he says about his father's house. He had not literally forgotten his father nor the kindness showered upon him from the days of his childhood. Neither had he literally ceased to remember the cruel treatment of his brother; but he ceased to lay it to heart; the *painful* remembrance of the past was expelled from his mind, when his adversity was changed into prosperity.

52. The name of the second called he  
25\*

54 \* And the seven years of dearth began to come, 'according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

s Ps. 105. 16. Acts 7. 11. t ver. 30.

*Ephraim*. That is, *fruitful*, as he himself immediately after explains it. He had formerly been like a heath in the desert, but now he was like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth abundance of fruit and whose leaf does not wither. This happy change he ascribes to the divine goodness. Perhaps it was owing to a suggestion from above that the name 'Ephraim' was given to Joseph's second son, rather than his first. As far as we know, he had no more children of his own body, but he was fruitful in his remote progeny, especially by Ephraim, and we find a striking allusion to this name in the blessings of Jacob; 'Joseph is a *fruitful* bough, even a *fruitful* bough by a well, whose branches run over a wall.' See Note on Gen. 49. 22.

53. The seven years of plenteousness were ended. When the people heard that the days of plenteousness were to be seven years, thousands would no doubt be strongly tempted to say to their souls, 'Eat, drink, and be merry; to-morrow shall be as this day, and so shall the next and many following days and years be, and much more abundantly.' But the day of prosperity was now at an end and the days of adversity had arrived. The end of all the changing things in this world of change will soon come, and then the beginning of them will appear like yesterday when it is past. 'A perpetuity of bliss is bliss,' and that only.

54. And the seven years of dearth be-

**55** And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

**56** And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

v ch. 42. 6. & 47. 14, 24.

*gan to come, &c.* Time to come will at last be time present, and the evils threatened by God will fall heavily upon those who use not the proper means of averting them. Joseph could look forward with a steady eye and without terror to the days of famine, which came at the time specified and were as grievous as he had predicted. When they came he knew that his wisdom would be acknowledged by all the land of Egypt, and by all the people of the surrounding countries. It was wisely ordered that the scarcity should extend to the neighboring lands; for the great end for which God is represented, Ps. 105. 16, as 'calling for it,' was to bring Jacob's sons, and eventually his whole family to Egypt; which end would not otherwise have been answered.

**55.** *The people cried to Pharaoh for bread.* Although there was abundance of corn in the land of Egypt, the people of the country were ready to perish for want. What was the reason of this? Had they not been forewarned that the terrible famine was coming? Joseph had indeed gathered up the fifth of the corn, yet enough was left not only to supply the present wants of the people, but to lay up for themselves against the famine. But they wanted Joseph's prudence. Unlike the ant, they made not in the summer due provision for the winter. Yet like the reckless Egyptians how many that are destined to live for ever in another world neglect in the proper season to lay up treasures in heaven?—¶ *Go unto Joseph; what he saith unto you, do.*

If any of the people had refused to go to Joseph, they would have despised not Joseph only, but the king also who had clothed him with power, and would have deserved to want that sustenance which he alone could give. And are not the despisers of our great Redeemer in like manner despisers of his Father, who has set him as King in his holy hill of Zion? If we need food for our souls, to whom are we to have recourse, but to Jesus whom God has appointed as the sole dispenser of that bread which nourisheth unto everlasting life? Those who will not come to him for the bread of life, are despisers of their own mercies. They must perish, and their blood shall be upon their own heads.

**56.** *The famine was over all the face of the earth.* An expression to be taken of course with some limitation. Egypt and the countries bordering upon it, Canaan, Syria, and Arabia are undoubtedly meant. The incident can scarcely fail to remind us of the distinguished advantages which we derive, under providence, from the improvements of modern times in the art of navigation. Were a great scarcity to occur amongst us we should expect relief from other countries by sea. Unless a famine should pervade the whole globe at the same time, we should have little doubt of obtaining from some quarter or other, without leaving our homes, at least a partial supply for our wants. In the days of Joseph, when the famine was sore through all the adjacent countries, the people, ready to perish

57 \* And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy

x Deut. 9. 23.

with hunger, were under the necessity of travelling to Egypt to procure corn. The Egyptians themselves were exempted from the labor of travelling to a distant land, for there were store-houses scattered through all the country; but they were compelled to part with their money for food. But for this they had only themselves to blame. Joseph did not compel them to sell any more corn than they were willing to sell, nor any more than they would probably have wasted in riot, if they had not sold it. And now he demanded no greater price than in the present circumstances he had a right to claim. It was not necessary to inform us that Joseph did not oppress the people in his dealings with them. The people themselves were witness to his uprightness when they afterwards said, 'Let us find favor in the sight of our lord, for thou hast saved our lives.' Joseph's prudence is evident also in another respect. Had he thrown open his store-houses before the Egyptians felt the pressure of hunger, they might soon have wasted the fruits of his provident care. They would have consumed those precious products of the earth, that would afterwards be necessary for themselves. Joseph therefore acted as one who knew that we are too little disposed to set a value on our blessings, till we have felt the want of them. Hunger, though very unpleasant, is often more useful than fulness of bread.—¶ *Joseph opened all the store-houses.* Heb. *יפתח את כל אשר בהם* *yiphtah eth kol asher bahem*, opened all wherein (was); i. e. wherein corn was; implying that it was dealt out with a generous liberality from

corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

every place of deposit.—¶ *And sold unto the Egyptians.* Heb. *ישבר yishbor*, broke; a term so applied because food breaks the fasting and hunger of men. Thus Ps. 104. 11, 'by means of water the wild asses quench their thirst.' Heb. *ישברו yishberu*, break their thirst.

57. *And all countries came into Egypt, &c.* All that a man hath will he give for his life, and for those things that are necessary to preserve life. He will travel into the most distant regions, rather than perish with hunger in the land of his nativity. He will brave the perils of the sea. He will not esteem any trial too great to be endured, any danger too fearful to be encountered, to avoid the horrors of starvation. Why then do men grudge a little labor, or a little expense for what is no less necessary for our souls, than the bread that perisheth is for our bodies?

#### CHAPTER XLII.

THE progress of events is bringing us still nearer the grand crisis which God had designed from the beginning in reference to Jacob's family. With this view the scene now shifts from Egypt to Canaan, which we find visited also with the common calamity. Even that land whose characteristic it was, that it flowed with milk and honey, was made to feel the effects of famine, and Jacob, the heir of promise, with his numerous household are represented as ready to perish for lack of food. This was a new trial to the faith of the patriarch, who had so long been a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But enabled as we are to contemplate the issues of these events together with



## CHAPTER XLII.

NOW when \*Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Ja-

a Acts 7. 12.

their *commencements*, we can see how wisely every step was ordered to accomplish the destined end. The distress occasioned by the famine would no doubt tend to bring down the high spirit of Jacob's sons and prepare them for that scene of overwhelming humiliation which awaited them in Egypt. Seeing their children crying for bread with none to give them, conscience would unquestionably awaken the bitter memory of guilt long past, and bring before them the time when they resolved, in cold blood, to starve an innocent brother to death. But there was still a farther design in all this. It was the will of God that Jacob should go down with his whole family to the land of Egypt, where his seed were to be oppressed till the time of their glorious deliverance; and considering the patriarch's great age and his hereditary attachment to the land of promise, we can see that under the influence of *ordinary* motives he would not have been induced to leave it. But it did not come within the plan of the divine proceedings to exercise any force upon Jacob's will. Whatever he did, he was to do it freely and rationally. Precisely such a train of events as that here related was adapted, as every one can see, with infinite wisdom to bring about the designed result.—But we proceed to the details.

1. *Now when Jacob saw, &c.* That is, learnt, understood, received information. The word 'see' is often equivalent to *understand* or to *have a perception of a thing*, whether by means of the sense of seeing or any other. Thus, Ex. 20. 18, 'And all the people *saw* the thunderings,' Rev. 1. 12. 'And I turn-

cob said unto his sons, **Why do ye look one upon another?**

2 And he said, Behold I have

ed to *see* the voice that spake with me.' In this sense of *understanding* is the language of the Evangelist to be interpreted, John 1. 18, 'No man *hath seen* God at any time;' i. e. hath fully and perfectly known him; hath duly *apprehended* his nature. This made it necessary that 'the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, should declare him.'—¶ *That there was corn in Egypt.* Heb. שֶׁבֶר *sheber, breaking*; so called for the reason given above, Gen. 41. 56. Gr. *πρᾶσις a selling.* Chal. 'That corn was sold.'—¶ *Why do ye look one upon another?* Gr. 'Why are ye slothful?' Vulg. 'Why are ye negligent?' Syr. 'Do not be afraid.' Why spend that time in painful anxiety which might have been better employed? None of them proposed an effectual remedy for relieving the present distress. They all looked at one another as if each expected that the other would suggest something for their common benefit. But they were all equally at a loss what to say or do. Jacob however had been too long schooled in the ways of God to expect, under any pressure of affliction, that a miracle would be wrought to give relief, when lawful and practicable means are in our power. He therefore rouses his hesitating sons from their torpor, and proposes an immediate journey into Egypt to purchase corn. As there is no necessity so strong as that of hunger, whatever repugnance they may have felt, from the haunting recollections of the past, to going down to Egypt, the country to which Joseph had been sold, it was at length overruled, and they determined to go.

heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may <sup>b</sup> live, and not die.

3 ¶ And Joseph's ten brethren

b ch. 43. 8. Ps. 118. 17. Isa. 1.

2. *Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt, &c.* If Jacob had heard from common report that there was corn in Egypt, why had he not heard from Joseph himself? Why did this favorite son delay a moment to inform his mourning father of the happy change in his circumstances? While he was a slave or a prisoner, it was not probably in his power to send him tidings of his fate. But when he had become lord of all Egypt, he certainly had it in his power to send as many messengers as he pleased. Surely, it will be said by some, he had but little regard to his father's comfort, when he left him seven years ignorant of what had befallen his best-beloved son. But let us not be precipitate in forming a judgment to the disadvantage of such a man as Joseph. He doubtless often thought of his beloved father, and would have been very happy to communicate any pleasure to a parent whom he so dearly loved. But there is a time for every thing. It is very possible that the news of Joseph's exaltation would have given more pain than pleasure to the good man, when informed of the circumstances that brought it about. The highest earthly grandeur of one son might not have compensated the grief which he would feel for the wickedness of the others. The time might come when Joseph would be enabled to inform his father of his glory to more advantage, and with less risk of making him unhappy. At any rate, we cannot doubt that Joseph was directed in all his movements

ren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren: for he said, <sup>c</sup> Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

c ver. 33.

by the overruling providence of God. And how do we know that he had not a revelation of the mind of God as to the way and the time of conveying that information to his father which he certainly wished to communicate?—¶ *That we may live and not die.* The patriarch uses strong language to shew his sons the necessity of going down to Egypt to buy food. He sets life and death before them; not their own life or death only, but the life or death of the whole family. The Lord was the God of their life; but they could not properly trust him for preserving it without using the appropriate means. But in humble dependence on the divine blessing they might set their faces cheerfully to the pains and perils of a long journey, and a protracted separation from their father, their wives, and their children. And that man deserves not the gift of life, who would not put himself to expence, who would not toil, who would not even risk his life when necessary, for those to whom he is indebted, or who are indebted to him, for life.

3, 4. *And Joseph's ten brethren went, &c.* They are called 'Joseph's brethren' and not Jacob's sons, because Joseph is at present the principal character in the story. But Benjamin is called Joseph's brother in a stricter sense. One mother brought them both into the world, and Jacob's fond attachment to Benjamin was in part the effect of his grief for the loss of Joseph. Benjamin became to him a second Joseph, and the other brethren ap-

5 And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came: for the famine was <sup>d</sup> in the land of Canaan.

6 And Joseph *was* the governor <sup>e</sup> over the land, *and* he *it was* that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and <sup>f</sup> bowed down themselves be-

fore him *with* their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

d Acts 7. 11. e ch. 41. 41. f ch. 37. 7.

pear to have taken no exception to their father's preference in this instance. It is likely they had already felt so bitter remorse for their wrongs to Joseph and the grief they had caused to their father, that he might safely have given Benjamin a coat of many colors without at all exciting their envy. The sad effects of former sins sometimes prevent men from involving themselves in the guilt of new ones.

6. *Joseph was the governor over the land.* Heb. שלטן *shallit* from the root שלט *shalat*, to have dominion, from which comes שלטון *shilton*, one that hath power, Eccl. 8. 4, and also the Chal. שולטן *sholtan*, prince, to which we are evidently to trace the Arabic and Turkish 'sultan,' the title of the chief ruler of the Ottoman empire, otherwise denominated the Grand Seignor. The term has gradually passed from implying a subordinate to signifying a supreme ruler. The time was when Joseph's brethren were men of high respectability in the land of Canaan, whilst Joseph himself was a slave or a prisoner in the land of Egypt. Now, by a signal reverse, Joseph was governor over all the land of Egypt, while they appeared before him as humble suppliants, almost craving as an alms those supplies of food for which they were both able and willing to pay the price demanded.—ו He it was that sold, &c. Heb. המשכר *ham mashbir*, that caused to break, or to

sell; i. e. that superintended the selling. We cannot suppose that Joseph, in person, sold all the corn that was carried out of the land of Egypt; but it is probable that he exercised an active and vigilant control over the selling, and he may have given more special attention to the travellers from Canaan, than to those of other countries, because the easiest entrance into Egypt, for an enemy, was from Canaan.—ו Bowed down themselves. Where now were the lofty looks and the contemptuous tone with which they said to him, after he had told them one of his dreams, 'Shalt thou indeed reign over us, or shalt thou have dominion over us?' Are these the men who said too on another occasion, 'Come, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some wild beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.' They did not indeed slay him, but they took a method which they hoped would be no less effectual to hinder the accomplishment of his dreams. And yet the remote consequence of their measures was the very thing which they hoped to prevent. They did not know how wonderful is the Lord of hosts in counsel, and how excellent in working, and how easily he can accomplish his purposes by the very means which are used to prevent their accomplishment.

7. *Made himself strange unto them,*

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9 And Joseph remembered

g ch. 37. 5, 9.

and spake roughly unto them. Heb. ידבר איתם קשות *yedabber ittam ka-shoth*, spake hard things with them. Although Joseph knew his brethren, yet he affected not to know them. Although he still loved them, he addressed them harshly. It would be an injury to Joseph's memory to suppose that his rough treatment of them was the effect of a revengeful spirit. He never thought of revenging himself on any of the persons who had dealt unkindly or unjustly with him in his low estate. We shall afterward find, that even when his heart melted for the distress of his brethren, he still continued to deal roughly with them. What then were his motives for assuming this stern demeanor? Partly, no doubt, to obtain a much-desired information in respect to his father and his father's family, without prematurely making himself known; and partly, to humble them by affliction, and bring them to a sense of the evil of dealing unjustly and harshly with himself. He was like a wise father, who thinks it necessary to correct his son, although he feels in his own bosom more distress than the object of his chastisement. 'Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' Kindness must sometimes put on an angry aspect, as on the other hand hatred too often wears smiles on its countenance.

8. *Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.* It is not difficult to see how this might have been the case. Joseph would naturally conjecture that his brethren, like others in the land of Canaan, would be compelled to come down to Egypt, to buy food. But his

the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them *Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.*

brethren never imagined that Joseph was to be lord of Egypt. Besides, it was now a long time since they had seen him; and they were then grown to man's estate, while he was but a lad. In the interval between that time and the present, he had endured much affliction, by which his countenance would be in some degree altered, and his habit and dress must have been greatly changed by his exaltation, while his brethren retained the manners and costume to which they had been accustomed in their early years. They had, moreover, as Fuller remarks, only one face to judge by, whereas he had ten, the knowledge of any one of which would lead to the knowledge of all. Something too may perhaps be attributed to the effect of their feelings. While Joseph had often thought of his brethren, and called to mind the features of their countenances, he was probably banished from their remembrance. It would have been very unpleasant to them to think of one whom they had treated with such unnatural cruelty. They willingly forgot the features of a man of whom they could not think without pangs of sorrow. Yet though they did not remember his face, they could not forget their guilt. We shall soon see that in a day of distress they remembered it with horror.

9. *Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed.* It is not to be supposed that Joseph had ever really forgotten his dreams; but as God is said to remember his covenant or his promise when he begins to put them in execution, so this was an efficient remembrance on the part of Joseph, implying

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11 We are all one man's sons, we are true *men*; thy servants are no spies.

that he now began to *put his dreams in a process of fulfilment*. See Note on Gen. 8. 1.—¶ *Ye are spies*. Heb. מַרְגְּלִים *meraggelim attem, ye are footing it*; i. e. going from place to place, traversing the country. The Hebrew has no other term to answer to the Eng. 'spy' than the present. The conduct of Joseph in this affair has been variously viewed. Some have supposed it impossible to exempt him from the charge of culpable dissimulation, when he alleged that his brethren were spies. His words express, it is said, a suspicion which certainly did not enter into his mind; and the apology made for him is, that he is nowhere represented as a perfect man; and although his departure from strict veracity is inexcusable, yet the goodness of his motives goes very far to extenuate the delinquency of the step. But to this it may be replied, that Joseph speaks designedly *under an assumed character*; and why such a character might not be assumed for the purpose for which Joseph had recourse to it, it is not easy to see. If it was lawful for the sacred writers and for the Savior to *speak* parables or allegories, why might it not be lawful for Joseph to *act* one? His brethren it is true were, for the present, led into a mistake as to the matter of fact, but no wrong was done them, they were defrauded of nothing, and no doubt when they themselves came to look back upon it afterward, they would acknowledge that the whole affair had been managed with the most entire innocence, as well as with the most consummate skill.—¶ *To see the nakedness of the land*. That is, the *exposedness* of the land; as a man unarmed

or a city without walls or garrison is said to be '*naked*.' Chal. 'The weaker places.' Others take it to mean the barrenness and destitution of the land occasioned by the failure of the crops. In either case the charge would simply be that they had come to see what prospect there would be of invading it with advantage in the present distress. 'We may here remark, that such an imputation as this remains to this day that to which a stranger is continually exposed in the East. The Orientals generally have no idea that people will make a journey unless from urgent necessity, or on gainful speculations; and if, therefore, a person does not travel in a mercantile character, or on some public business, he is invariably considered as a spy—more especially if he turns aside or stops to examine any remarkable object, or is discovered in the act of writing, or making observations of any kind. Curiosity, or the desire of collecting information, are motives perfectly incomprehensible to them, and are always treated as shallow and childish pretences. They ask triumphantly whether you have no trees, birds, animals, rivers, or ruins at home to engage your attention, that you should come so far to look for them.' *Pict. Bible*.

10. *They said unto him, Nay, my lord, &c.* The conduct of Jacob's sons in the affair of the Shechemites shews them to have been ordinarily men of spirit, yet they here behave themselves humbly and submissively to the man who endeavored to fix upon them a groundless imputation. They modestly and respectfully disowned the charge, and if they cherished any resentment, it was swallowed up by fear, as the

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants *are* twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan: and behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one <sup>h</sup> *is* not.

14 And Joseph said unto them, That *is it* that I spake unto you, saying, Ye *are* spies:

h ch. 37. 30. & 44. 20. Lam. 5. 7.

man with whom they had to do was the lord of the country.

11. *We are all one man's sons.* This was calculated to give satisfaction in reply to the charge, because it was not to be supposed that one man would suffer ten of his sons, to engage at once in a business so full of perils as that of spies, or that so many brethren would risk the almost total extirpation of their father's house at one blow. It requires a man of a very daring spirit to venture his own life in so desperate an enterprise; but who would venture in it at once his own life and the life of almost all that are dear to him?—

¶ *We are true men, &c.* We are what we claim to be, and have assumed no false character. Had they really been spies, they would have lied when they pretended to have come to buy corn. But from this charge they could clear themselves with a good conscience.

12, 13. *And he said unto them, Nay, &c.* As this is a mere repetition of what he affirms, v. 9, it is to be justified on the same grounds.—¶ *Thy servants are twelve brethren, &c.* Joseph gains his end by persisting in his charge. They did not at first declare all the truth. By pressing the allegation, he elicits from them several interesting items of information which they would probably otherwise have concealed. He

26

15 Hereby ye shall be proved: <sup>i</sup> By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you: or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye *are* spies.

i 1 Sam. 1. 26. & 17. 55.

has the satisfaction of learning that his father is yet alive, and that Benjamin is his favorite, as he himself had been. Moreover, that his brethren treated their father with the respect which he so well deserved, might be inferred from the manner in which they spoke of him, and from their leaving Benjamin to comfort him in their absence. They did not indeed speak the truth when they said, 'One is not;' but it is probable they said what they thought might be true. Still this does not wholly free them from the guilt of falsehood. A man lies not only when he affirms what he knows to be false, but also when he affirms what he does not know to be true. We may indeed declare what seems to us only probable, but let it be uttered in language expressive of uncertainty. In the country where they dwelt, no doubt the common opinion was that Joseph had been torn to pieces by wild beasts. His brethren knew this to be false, but they did not think it prudent to contradict it, lest their own wickedness should be exposed; and they had so often spoken of Joseph's death, that they now almost believed their own lie. If we would keep clear of the way of lying, let us do nothing that needs concealment.

14—16. *That is it that I spake unto you, &c.* This confirms what I before

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

18 And Joseph said unto them

said. Joseph here intimates that they had as yet said nothing that gave him sufficient reason to alter his opinion. They had indeed said something in their own defence that might be true, but he wished to have better evidence of the truth of it. He now proposes to put them to the proof. Let them bring that younger brother of whom they spake, and he will believe that they were what they called themselves, and not spies. He is willing to admit that it was not probable that one man would send all his sons into a foreign country on the perilous errand of spies. The only question then was whether they were really the sons of one man. Let them bring their other brother, and Joseph will believe them.—¶ *By the life of Pharaoh.* This was doubtless a common form of asseveration among the Egyptians, equivalent to the phrase, 'As the Lord liveth,' 'As thy soul liveth,' &c. among the Hebrews, which we no where learn to have been sinful. Joseph adopted the phraseology common in the country in order the better to keep up his mask. Had he said, 'As the Lord liveth,' his speech would probably have betrayed him. 'Swearing by the life of a superior or respected person, or by that of the person addressed, is a common conversational oath in different parts of Asia. In Persia, although the force of the expression is precisely the same, its form is varied to swearing by the *head*, particularly by the head of the king. 'By the king's head, by his death, or by his soul' are expressions which are continually heard in that country, and are used even by the king, who generally speaks of himself in the third person. The Persians also swear by their own heads, and by

the third day, This do, and live; \* for I fear God:

k Lev. 25. 43. Neh. 5. 15.

those of the persons to whom they speak. Pharaoh's swearing by himself, in chap. 41. 44, 'I am Pharaoh,' seems to receive some illustration from the practice of the Persian king.' *Pict. Bible.*

17. *Put them.* Heb. יָרְכָם *ye-esoph* collected or gathered them. It seems they did not consent to the terms proposed. None of them would consent to go and bring down Benjamin if all the rest, as Joseph proposed, were to be kept imprisoned till their return. He therefore, with great apparent severity, puts them all into custody for three days. All this was with a view to the end which he wished to have accomplished. It was doubtless with reluctance that he threw into prison those men who had thrown himself into the pit and sold him into Egypt. But he hoped that imprisonment by the governor of Egypt would awaken their consciences to a sense of the great iniquity of selling their brother into that country, where God was now rendering their sins into their own bosom.

18. *And Joseph said unto them the third day, &c.* After a period sufficiently long for them to reflect seriously on what they had done, and what they should do, Joseph pays them a visit, and in a temper of more apparent mildness, assures them he has no designs upon their life, nor any wish to hurt their family; and ventures to give a reason for it which to them must have appeared no less surprising than satisfying, 'I fear God.' It is indeed somewhat doubtful in what sense they would understand him. The same word in the original may either signify one God or more gods than one; and they might suppose that he had reference to

19 If ye *be true men*, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

20 But <sup>1</sup>bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

<sup>1</sup> ver. 34. ch. 43. 5, & 44. 23.

the gods of Egypt. But even in this case, they would be induced to place more confidence in him, when they understood that he was impressed with reverence for the gods whom he worshipped. It was some degree of security to them that they would not long be ill treated. But on the other hand, if they understood it of the true God, they would be still more encouraged. 'If he knows and serves the God of our fathers, surely we have no injustice to fear at his hands, nor will he withhold food from a starving family.' It was his wish to make his brethren know and feel what an evil and bitter thing it was to be guilty of inhuman conduct toward the innocent. But it was his wish also not to forfeit entirely their confidence; for if they did not trust his word, they would not be induced to do what he desired. It was perhaps owing to the distrust which his severity inspired that they were unwilling to send for their younger brother. He therefore utters an expression which would go greatly to calm their apprehensions of the issue. The assurance that he feared God was equivalent to saying that he would deal justly and truly with them. Thus wisely did he temper goodness with severity; awakening their fears by his apparent harshness, and yet affording them a gleam of hope just sufficient to keep their minds from sinking. God makes use of methods very similar to bring sinners to repentance.

21 ¶ And they said one to another, <sup>m</sup>We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; <sup>n</sup>therefore is this distress come upon us.

<sup>m</sup> Job 36. 8. 9. Hos. 5. 15. <sup>n</sup> Prov. 21. 13. Matt. 7. 2.

19, 20. *If ye be true men, &c.* Here is a relaxation of the terms first proposed. In the first instance he proposed that one of their number should be sent for Benjamin, and all the rest confined till his return. Here he proposes that one should be confined, and all the rest despatched to their father's house. This would naturally give them a little farther reviving in their bondage. — ¶ *And they did so.* That is, agreed to do so.

21. *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty, &c.* While Joseph, the better to conceal himself, speaks and acts like a real Egyptian, God employs his affected sternness and severity to awaken their slumbering consciences and to shew them to themselves. Though they were chargeable with many other sins, particularly Simeon and Levi, yet the treatment to which they were subjected, brought to remembrance in a special manner their sin against their brother. This was an atrocious iniquity of which they were the most of them equally guilty. Conscience with unerring certainty refers their punishment to their crime, and charges it upon them with fearful distinctness. Their full hearts now begin to utter themselves, and as if they read in each other's looks that the same thoughts were in all their minds at the same time, no sooner does one break silence than they all immediately join in ascribing the evil which had befallen them to its true source. They would



22 And Reuben answered them, saying, 'Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore behold also his blood is p required.

23 And they knew not that Jo-

o ch. 37. 21. p ch. 9. 5. 1 Kings 2. 32. 2 Chron. 24. 22. Ps. 9. 12. Luke 11. 50, 51.

not hear Joseph in his distress, and now they could not be heard. They had thrown him into a pit, and now are themselves thrown into prison. It would be well for us if we could entertain the same views of sin in the time of temptation that we are likely to have after it is committed, or at the time when trouble brings it home to our consciences. But alas! we suffer ourselves to be blinded to the consequences of our conduct till we discover it in the fearful retributions of a guilty conscience and an angry providence.

22. *And Reuben answered them, saying, &c.* The convictions described in the preceding verse were heightened by the reproaches of Reuben, who teaches them to expect blood for blood. Of him it might be truly said on this occasion, 'There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword.' 'Reuben was that, methinks, to his brethren, which conscience is to a sinner; remonstrating at the outset, and when judgment overtakes him, reproaching him and foreboding the worst of consequences.' *Fuller*. Reuben could not indeed take it upon him to reflect with severity upon his brethren because he himself was guiltless; for he was not. But we do not blame him for helping forward the painful convictions of his brethren. It was fit that they should be made to feel the stings of conscience; and it was proper that he should be the remembrancer of their crime, because he had warned them against it. And how utterly inexcusa-

seph understood *them*; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

ble do his words represent the deed. 'Spake I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child.' What apology could they offer? Did they consider his telling his dreams an insult? He was but a child. Had they a right to destroy a youth of seventeen years of age because he had not all the wisdom and caution of a man of thirty? Surely those ought never to be fathers who know not how to make allowance for the inexperience of youth.—¶ *Behold also his blood is required.* But why does he say that Joseph's blood was required? They had shed no blood. But they at first intended to have killed Joseph, and this purpose was murder in the sight of God, though not of so black a kind as the actual shedding of his blood would have been. To form a wicked purpose and afterward relinquish it, is less criminal than to hold it fast till it be accomplished; yet the purpose is marked in the book of God's remembrance, and can only be pardoned through the great atonement. Reuben, however, may have charged his brethren with the guilt of blood, because there was reason to believe that death had been the consequence of their barbarous treatment of Joseph. From his not having been heard of for the space of more than twenty years, it was highly probable that their inhuman conduct had exposed him to those hardships and sorrows which had brought him to an untimely grave.

23, 24. *He spake unto them by an in-*

25 ¶ Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them

provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

q Matt. 5. 44. Rom. 12. 17, 20, 21.

*terpreter.* Heb. המליץ ביניהם *ham-melitz benotham*, an *interpreter* (was) *between them*. That is, he had all

along hitherto spoken to them by an interpreter, though at this particular time he appears not to have been present. As affecting as was the scene now described, Joseph stood by and heard and understood it all without their suspecting it. But such words were too much for the heart of man, at least such a man as he was, to bear, and the pretended Egyptian becomes, in spite of himself, a real Israelite. His bosom swells, his features change, and the tear starts to his eye. In order to prevent a premature discovery he is constrained to retire, and compose his feelings. As soon as he was able to dry up his tears and control his emotions, he returned to them again, and after some further conversation, putting on an air of stern authority, he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes. As Simeon had given proof on a former occasion that he was capable of atrocious wickedness, there are perhaps plausible grounds for believing that his hands were chief in the trespass against Joseph. If so, his being bound would tend to humble him, and heighten the fears of all the rest, as beholding in it the righteous judgment of God. Still we cannot think that this was done in a vindictive spirit on the part of Joseph. The measure was adopted with a view to the good of Simeon and the rest of his brethren. He bound him in prison, but he did it to set him free from the far worse chains of his own fierce passions. His other brethren, moreover, needed severe rebukes, but no verbal

reproofs were so likely to subdue their haughty spirits, as the sight of the distress of their brother and companion in iniquity. In the judgment of charity he hoped their repentance was sincere; but farther proofs of it were requisite before he could place entire confidence in them. The skilful surgeon sometimes finds himself compelled to give pain by making deeper incisions than others would deem necessary.

25. *Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, &c.* Like all the rest of Joseph's proceedings this also was prompted by love, but love operating at present in a way to perplex, confound, and dismay them. He heaped coals of fire upon their heads by furnishing them out so liberally with provision for their families and themselves, while for prudential reasons he caused their money to be secretly returned. His generosity could not bear the appearance of taking money of his father for the corn which he sold. What he thought it necessary to take with the one hand, he restored with the other. But was it generosity to give away the king's money? Or did he not know that the clandestine restoration of his brethren's money would cause them deep distress when they discovered it? As to the first point, we need not spend many words in vindicating Joseph from the suspicion of dishonesty. He was not a man to be guilty of embezzling the public funds. He used no more discretionary power than his master authorized him to do. The money put into his brothers' sacks might be his own private property; or if it belonged to the king, the emoluments of his office would no doubt en-

27 And as <sup>r</sup>one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money: for behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

r ch. 43, 21.

able him to put the price into the king's treasury. As to the effects of the step upon the minds of his brethren, it would doubtless fill them with fearful misgivings and dread; but such appears to have been his intention from the beginning. If his brethren had known all they would not have felt as they did; but neither would they have been brought to so right a state of mind, nor have been prepared, as they were, for that which followed. In like manner when God designs to bring a sinner to a right mind, he often sees fit to lead him into dark and intricate situations, of which he shall be utterly unable to see the design; to awaken by turns his fears and his hopes; bring his sin to remembrance; and to cause him to feel his danger, and his utter insufficiency to deliver his soul. But what he knows not now he will know hereafter.

27. *In the inn.* Heb. במלון *bam-malon*, in the lodging-place, from לון *lon* to lodge for a night. By this is not to be understood an inn like those that are common with us, nor, probably, even a *chan* or *caravanserai*; which we can hardly suppose to have been in use at this early period. The word properly implies no more than a mere *stopping-place*, or *camping-ground*; a place where travellers were in the habit of stopping to bait or rest themselves and their asses, or to tarry over night. Even at the present day there are no places of entertainment in the particular desert over which they had to pass.

28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and lo, *it is* even in my sack: and their heart failed *them*, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What *is* this *that* God hath done unto us?

28. *My money is restored, &c.* Whatever satisfaction they may have felt in the idea of getting out of the reach of the lord of Egypt, who had causelessly taken them for spies, and confined them in prison, it is all suddenly damped by the untoward event here mentioned. It instantly occurred to them that it would be construed to their disadvantage; and that to their other crimes those of theft and ingratitude must now be added. Their minds were now in such a state as to render them peculiarly liable to the impressions of fear. A guilty conscience is sure to represent the most trifling occurrence as a subject of alarm, or as an omen of destruction. They had, however, learned one good lesson from the past, viz. that all their troubles and dangers were to be referred to a righteous Providence. 'What is this that God has done unto us?' They do not reproach the cruel governor of Egypt, notwithstanding from his treatment of them they no doubt suspected some ill design against them.. But overlooking second causes they attribute directly to the judgments of God what had now befallen them. It seemed to them that he was still pursuing them in a mysterious way, and with a design to require their brother's blood at their hand. He had led them and brought them into darkness and not into light, and what might be the end of his dispensations towards them they were utterly at a loss to conceive. Confident they are that he has not yet done with them.—¶ *Their heart failed them.*

29 ¶ And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them, saying,

30 The man *who is* the lord of the land, <sup>2</sup>spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31 And we said unto him, We are true *men*; we are no spies :

32 We *be* twelve brethren, sons of our father: one *is* not, and the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, 'Hereby shall I know that ye *are* true *men*: leave one of your brethren *here* with me, and take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone :

34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye *are* no spies, but *that ye are true men*: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall <sup>2</sup>traffick in the land.

35 ¶ And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that behold, <sup>2</sup>every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when *both* they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye <sup>2</sup>bereaved of *my children*: Joseph *is* not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me.

s ver. 7. t ver. 15, 19, 20.

v ch. 34, 10. x ch. 43, 21. y ch. 43, 14.

Heb. וַיֵּצֵא לִבָּם *vayetze libbam*, and their heart went forth. Thus Cant. 5. 6, 'My soul failed when he spake.' Heb. 'went forth.' The Gr. here renders by ἐξέστη η καρδια, *their heart was astonished*. Chal. 'The knowledge of their heart departed.' Arab. 'Their hearts were much disturbed.'

29—34. *And they came unto Jacob, &c.* Arriving at their father's house, they relate to him all that had befallen them in Egypt. The rough treatment they had received; the suspicion which had fallen on them; the defence they had made; the terms on which they had been suffered to return, to wit, that they should leave Simeon and bring down Benjamin. Their narrative must have given their father a very bad idea of the lord of the land. They said nothing of him but the truth, and yet Jacob must have formed an opinion far remote from the truth. Joseph must have appeared to him as an insolent, overbearing tyrant, that made use of

his power to crush poor men under his feet. 'Surely,' might the patriarch have said, 'the fear of God is not before the eyes of this man, who shows so little regard to the comfort, the liberty, the lives of his fellow-men.' Yet Joseph's conduct towards his brethren was full of wisdom and mercy. He dealt hardly with them, that he might do them good. So far is the appearance from always corresponding with the reality of things. 'Judge nothing before the time.'

35. *It came to pass as they emptied their sacks, &c.* They appear to have concealed the mysterious circumstance of the money being found by the way in their sacks. But they might have thought that their father would have blamed them for not returning with it when they were only a day's journey from Egypt, and therefore agreed to say nothing about it. Hence it is that they are represented, on opening their sacks, as discovering the money in a

manner, as if they knew nothing about it before, and as sharing in the surprise and apprehensions of their father.

36. *Me have ye bereaved, &c.* These words are expressive of that desponding and querulous spirit which is apt to find place in the heart even of a good man in the day of darkness. It should be remembered, however, that words expressive of the passionate workings of the mind are usually to be understood with a limitation of their import. When Jacob says that he was bereaved of his children, the meaning is, that he was bereaved of two or three of them. When he speaks of his sons then present, as if they had bereaved him of his children, he does not mean that they had murdered them or sold them into a strange land. He means that by their unwise conduct *they had had some agency, they had been instrumental*, in bringing the calamity upon him. If they had not rambled about with their flocks from one place to another, Joseph might not have met with those wild beasts that tore him in pieces. If they had not, by some imprudent conduct, excited suspicion in the mind of the hard-hearted governor of Egypt, Simeon would not have been kept in prison. If they had not spoken to the governor about their younger brother, he might have still been left at home when they returned to buy more corn. Jacob, however, spoke more truth than he was aware of in the words, 'Me have ye bereaved of my children.' They had sold Joseph into Egypt, and Simeon's imprisonment was the consequence of that criminal conduct. But as we have no good reason to think that Jacob suspected them to be guilty, his words are to be considered as an angry reflection, which the distress of his mind drew from his lips rather than his heart. Yet it is proper to remark that some commentators suppose that

his words on this occasion betray a lurking suspicion that they had been accessory to Joseph's death; and that on account of this secret misgiving, he was unwilling to trust Benjamin in their hands. But whether he meant to reflect on his sons or not, his language no doubt savors too much of complaint. But he speaks in the anguish of his soul, and we cannot help allowing for the pungency of his emotions. —¶ *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not.* More is said than was meant, and more was meant than was true, in these words. The patriarch knew that Simeon was not dead, as far as his information reached, but he was almost given over as a dead man by his father, though he had not any sufficient reason to do it. God might soften the heart of the governor of Egypt, and induce him to spare and release Simeon. But we often make our burdens heavier than they ought to be, by adding to them the weight of our own gloomy apprehensions; or we represent them heavier than we feel them to be, by words that convey more meaning than they ought. —¶ *And ye will take Benjamin away.* True; they would take him away to Egypt, but not out of the world. To go a long journey was a different thing from dying. He might indeed be exposed to some danger from the treatment of the unfeeling lord of Egypt, but will so good a man as Jacob make himself and his house miserable, because a favourite son may be lost, when he was not exposed to greater danger than his brethren? Even those who are eminent fearers of God, are too often deprived of a great part of the happiness they might enjoy, through the infirmity of their faith. —¶ *All these things are against me.* How did Jacob know this? Because his feelings, his affections, and the general sense of mankind, told him it was a great mis-

37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into mine hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38 And he said, My son shall

not go down with you; for <sup>a</sup> his brother is dead, and he is left alone; <sup>b</sup> if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye <sup>c</sup> bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

a ver. 13. & ch. 37. 33. & 44. 28. b ver. 4. & ch. 44. 29. c ch. 37. 35. & 44. 31.

ry to lose a son, especially the best and most beloved of sons. But in fact the very reverse was the case, as Jacob afterward found Joseph was sent before him into Egypt to provide sustenance for his family. Simeon was bound in prison to mortify his haughty spirit. Benjamin was to be taken away that he might find Joseph alive and happy. A great portion of our present trouble arises from our not knowing the whole truth.

37. *And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, &c.* However well meant, this was a rash speech on the part of Reuben. When men use this kind of language, their words are scarcely to be understood in the literal sense. They are only strong assertions, tinctured with somewhat of a profane levity of mind. It does not become the lips of a serious man to say, 'I will give you leave to take away my life unless I do this or that.' How do we know what we shall be able to do a day or an hour hence? Reuben no doubt had reason to hope that his brethren would not treat Benjamin as they had treated Joseph. He had reason to hope that the lord of Egypt would keep his promise. But was he so sure of both these things, and of meeting with no bad accident in the journey, that he could warrantably pledge the life of his two sons for Benjamin's happy return? He knew that Jacob would not take him at his word; but what if God should, by some untoward event, make him sensible that he had spoken the language of virtual impiety?

38. *My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, &c.* But had Jacob no more than two sons when Joseph was alive? How was Benjamin left alone? Had he no brothers yet living? Why does Jacob thus make such a distinction between the children of Rachel and his other children, as might kindle up envy among his household? It is well for us that polygamy is so strictly interdicted under the gospel dispensation. It seems to have required more than all the wisdom of Abraham or Jacob to govern with impartiality a family born of different mothers. And those fathers who have children by different wives in succession have need to pray for wisdom to rule their houses in such a manner, that while they show their paternal fondness to the children of the one, they do no injustice in word or deed to those of the other.—¶ *If mischief befall him, &c.* He puts them in mind of his gray hairs, which always constitute a claim for reverence, but more especially from children. It was natural that he should make the strongest possible appeal to the filial sentiments of his children, to spare him the crushing sorrow which he saw likely to overwhelm him, yet in saying he should die of grief he went beyond the bounds of a reasonable apprehension. Was Benjamin his God, his life, his only hope, his single joy? As God had supported him under the loss of one son could he not make him to survive the loss of another? But in this Jacob utters the language of human

## CHAPTER XLIII.

**A**ND the famine *was* <sup>a</sup> sore in the land.

2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall

a ch. 41. 54, 57.

infirmity, and all that are human will be slow to condemn in him what they would probably evince in themselves.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

1, 2. *And the famine was sore in the land, &c.* The relief obtained by the first journey to Egypt was soon exhausted, and as nothing of the native productions of Canaan could be added to it to make it last the longer, it is easy to see that they must have been again reduced to the greatest extremities. The fact of Simeon's continued confinement in Egypt would quicken Jacob's proposal that they should go thither for a new supply of food. They had indeed met with difficulties and danger in their former journey, but great difficulties and dangers must often be encountered to prevent worse. Let it not be thought an hard matter that the service of Christ often requires peculiar hardships and hazards. The world requires as great sacrifices as Christ, and is far less able to recompense them. In laboring for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, we seldom meet with such difficulties and perils as are often encountered in laboring for the meat that perisheth.—¶ *Had eaten up.* That is, had nearly consumed. It is not to be supposed that they would wait till their former stock was *entirely exhausted* before sending for another

not see my face, except your <sup>b</sup> brother *be* with you.

4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:

5 But if thou wilt not send *him* we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

b ch. 42. 20. & 44. 23.

supply. In like manner, 1 Kings 6. 1, 'And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year, &c. (Heb.) *that he built* the house of the Lord;' i. e. (Eng.) *began* to build. Luke 5. 6, 'They inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net *brake*;' i. e. began to break, was on the point of breaking. John 2. 3, 'And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine;' i. e. when their wine was on the point of failing.

3. *Judah spake unto him, saying, &c.* The former difficulty respecting the younger brother here recurs. They cannot, must not, go without him. Reuben had tried to gain Jacob's consent to the step, but without success. Judah, a man much superior to Reuben in prudence and activity, attempts the difficult task and gains his point. In order to this he tells him that the man who ruled over Egypt did not merely *say*, but solemnly *protest*, to them *that* they should not again see his face, nor traffic in the land, unless they brought with them their younger brother. He therefore intimates that if Jacob did not wish them to go in vain to Egypt; if he did not desire them to confirm the unjust suspicions that had been entertained of them, he must not refuse to part with Benjamin.—¶ *The man did solemnly protest.* Heb. הָעֵר הָעֵר *ha-ed he-id, protesting protested*; i. e.

6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, *as* to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?

7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, *Is* your father yet alive, have ye *another* brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words:

protested solemnly and earnestly, even with an oath. See Gen. 42. 15.

4, 5. *If thou wilt send our brother, &c.* It is right indeed that children should obey their parents in the Lord, but parents should take heed they enjoin not upon their children that which is unjust, unreasonable, or impracticable. Under the circumstances Judah was no doubt justifiable in making conditions with his venerable father. The command of Jacob was not simply to go to Egypt, but to go and procure corn from Egypt. This was impracticable unless Benjamin went along with his brethren.

6, 7. *Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, &c.* The foregoing decided statement of Judah brings forth another objection, or rather complaint, on the part of Jacob, to which his sons reply in a very becoming manner. Children are bound to bear with the infirmities of aged parents, and particularly with what they say under the pressure of extraordinary affliction. Though Jacob's reflections were somewhat severe and sullen, yet they do not ask him, where was the great criminality of telling any man that they had another brother? They do not recriminate and tell him that he sought occasion to reproach them without any shadow of ground. They calmly remind him that they were under a necessity of informing the man concerning their younger brother, and that it was im-

possible for them to foresee the use that would be made of the information. When the governor of Egypt interrogated them so sternly, some answer they must give. They could not remain silent without strengthening the suspicions entertained of them. If then they were under a necessity of answering these questions they were bound to speak the truth. Interest as well as duty forbids men to lie, for a lie is always liable to detection. And men exposed to danger from unjust suspicions ought above all other men to adhere to strict veracity. If one lie be found in their mouth, twenty more will probably be imputed to them.—¶ *Asked us straitly.* Heb. שאל שאל *shaal sha-al, asking asked.* —¶ *According to the tenor.* Heb. על פי *al pi, according to the mouth;* i. e. according as the nature of his questions required. Gr. κατὰ τὴν ἐπερωτησιν *katatēn eperōtēsēn according to this asking.* 'Send a messenger with a message to deliver, and ask him on his return what he said, and he will reply, 'According to your mouth.'' *Roberts.*—¶ *Could we certainly know?* Heb. הירדע נדע *hayadoa neda, knowing could we know?*

8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, *and* also our little ones.

8. *Send the lad with me, &c.* How forcible are right words! Jacob could not resist the force of Judah's argument. He loved Benjamin dearly; but he loved all his other children, and all his little grand-children; and surely, Judah intimates, he would not suffer them all to perish with hunger, that he



9 I will be surety for him; of mine hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:

10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

c ch. 44. 32. Philem. 18, 19.

might have the pleasure of enjoying the company of Benjamin. Grant that he stood in fear of Benjamin's life if he went down into Egypt; yet the danger was greater on the other side. He was more likely to die if he did *not* go to Egypt; and it is more painful to die by hunger, than by some fatal accident on a journey. But in fact the danger of perishing in the course of the journey appeared to Judah only imaginary. The peculiar usage of the Heb. in regard to 'lad' as explained Gen. 22. 5, is here to be borne in mind. Benjamin was now at least thirty years of age; and had children of his own, yet he is here called 'a lad,' because he was the youngest of all the sons of Jacob, and, in the lack of Joseph, the favorite of his aged father.

9. *I will be surety for him.* Judah must have known that his brethren were quite different men from what they once were, when he professed his willingness to become surety for Benjamin; nor did he entertain so bad an opinion of the governor of Egypt, as his father seems to have done. He could not certainly say that either himself or Benjamin would return in safety from Egypt; but he saw that it was less unsafe to venture the journey than to stay at home; and was disposed to commit the result to God. It might indeed appear that a more *conditional* mode of speech would have been more

11 And their father Israel said unto them, If *it must be* so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little \*balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

d ch. 32. 20. Prov. 18. 16. e ch. 37. 25. Jer. 8. 22.

decorous; one that should have conformed to the scriptural direction, 'Say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that;' but it is not necessary always to use these express words. They are often to be understood where they are not expressed. Judah certainly knew that it depended entirely on the will of God whether he or his brother should live another hour. In proffering to become surety for Benjamin, he took it for granted that his father would attach no blame to him for what could neither be foreseen nor avoided.—¶ *Let me bear the blame.* Heb. *הטאתי לך hatathi leka*, *I will be a sinner to thee*; i. e. I will consent to be reputed guilty of violating my plighted faith. In the same sense the word occurs, 1 Kings 1. 21. 'Otherwise it shall come to pass that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.' *קרב Shall be sinners.'*

10 *Except we had lingered, &c.* Jacob's fondness for Benjamin was so excessive that he suffered his affections to overbear his judgment. Simeon was in consequence detained much longer in prison than he might have been; and the family of Jacob was reduced to a stinted allowance of provision. Had he suffered Benjamin to leave him some time before, they might all by this time have returned to their father's house. Men blinded by affection too often disappoint themselves, and by needless and unwise delays cui

12 And take double money in your hand; and the money <sup>f</sup> that was brought again in the mouth

of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure it *was* an oversight:

f ch. 42, 25, 35.

themselves off from the enjoyment of much happiness that they might otherwise have secured to themselves.

11. *If it must be so now, do this, &c.* Jacob's reluctant consent is at length wrung from him by imperious necessity. He who a short time before had said, 'My son shall not go down with you,' is now upon the whole constrained to part with him. A rash man will, at all hazards, obstinately persist in a course once determined upon, but a wise man will yield to reason, be it from a servant, from a son, from a wife, or from any other person, however inferior to himself in station, in good sense, or piety. The manner in which the patriarch acquiesces is worthy of remark. It is not the sullen consent of one who yields to fate while his heart rebels against it. No; he yields in a manner worthy of a man of God; proposing first that every possible means should be used to conciliate the <sup>an</sup>, the lord of the land, and then committing the issue of the whole to God. He recollected the effect of a present in appeasing his brother Esau's anger when coming against him with a formidable host. He had it not in his power, perhaps, or it was not convenient, to send so rich a present to Egypt. But it would seem that the land of Canaan still produced some precious commodities not to be found in Egypt, or not to be found there in such perfection. Of these he collects some of the choicest specimens and sends them down to Egypt where, in a time of famine, they would no doubt be very acceptable; at any rate they would be viewed as a great token of respect. ¶ *Of the best*

*fruits of the land.* Heb. מִזְמֶרֶת הָאָרֶץ *mizzimrath haaretz*, of the song, music, or melody of the land; a strong metaphorical expression, by which the fruits of the earth are named from the songs and praises by which the gathering them in at harvest was accompanied. Others, however, with less reason suppose the import to be that of fruits of so excellent a quality as to be especially worthy of being praised, fit to be celebrated in songs and hymns.

12. *Take double money in your hand.*

Heb. כֶּסֶף מִשְׁנָה *keseeph mishneh*, silver or money of repetition. The original does not necessarily imply a double amount of money to that first taken, but may be understood simply of another or second sum in respect to the first. But on the whole the idea seems to be that they were to take back the money which had been put in the sacks, together with as much more; and this would be double money. — ¶ *Peradventure it was an oversight.* It was difficult to say how the money had come into the mouth of their sacks. Perhaps it was wilfully put in for some bad purpose. So Jacob feared when he first saw it. Perhaps it was an oversight. So now he thought or wished to think, like a man who in doubtful matters comes to that conclusion which is most conducive to his peace. But if it were an oversight, he will take no advantage of it. No man of integrity will take an unrighteous advantage of the mistakes of those with whom he deals. Nothing is more palpably inconsistent with the great rule of doing to other men as you would that they should do unto you. Besides, it would have been very unsafe for Jacob's sons

13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man :

14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that

he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin: \* If I be bereaved of *my children*, I am bereaved.

g Esther 4. 16.

to have taken advantage of an oversight in the present case. It might have confirmed the suspicions or awakened the resentment of the lord of Egypt. But it is *never* safe to do any injustice while God reigns in heaven, who will never suffer any man with impunity to go beyond or defraud his brother.

13. *Take also your brother, &c.* This was the greatest trial of all, but Jacob determines to submit to it. We must obey necessity, and ought to do it without repining. No doubt at the first proposal Jacob would as soon have sent Benjamin to the lions' dens. The wild beasts that tore Joseph in pieces did not seem more formidable to the dejected mind of the patriarch, than the man who had entertained such unjust suspicions concerning his sons, and who had probably put money into their sacks for no good purpose. But deep religious principle triumphs over the struggles of nature. Thus we sometimes see an affectionate relative, who, in the first stages of a dangerous disease, thought it impossible to sustain the loss of a beloved object, gradually reconciled; and at length witnessing the dying pangs with tranquil resignation.

14. *God Almighty give you mercy before the man, &c.* However a good man may guide his affairs with discretion, yet he will not trust to his own prudence. When he has done every thing proper to be done, he will commit the event to God, and lift up his soul to him in prayer for a blessing on the result. Thus did Jacob on a former trying occasion, and thus did he now. We may observe the language

in which he expresses himself. He does not load the cruel man, who had treated his children so rigorously, with any railing accusations before the Lord. All that he asks is, not that the man's injustice should be turned upon his own head, or that the arm which had oppressed his family should be broken; but that his heart might be inclined to pity a poor distressed family, and let the oppressed go free. Jacob well knew that the hearts of kings and their ministers are in the hand of the Lord; and that whatsoever a man devises, the Lord directs his steps. His prayer which was addressed to the Almighty or All-sufficient God of Abraham, was no doubt acceptable, because offered to a covenant God in true faith; but yet it is clear that it was founded on a mistake. He prayed for the turning of the man's heart in a way of mercy, when in fact his heart did not need turning. Yet Jacob thought it did, and had no means of knowing otherwise. The truth of things may sometimes be concealed from us to render us more importunate, and though God could easily pour the light of certainty on our minds, yet he sees that it is better for us to abide for a time in darkness. But another remarkable feature of the prayer is the *resignation* which breathes forth in the closing sentence, 'If I be bereaved, I am bereaved.' This is equivalent to the expression occurring Est. 4. 16, 'If I perish, I perish.' It is as if he had said, 'I commit the event unreservedly to God. If it seem good unto him to bereave me of my children, the will of the Lord be done; I have nothing to say. The Lord gave, and the Lord

15 ¶ And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the

<sup>h</sup> ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready: for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.

17 And the man did as Joseph bade: and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

h ch. 24. 2. & 39. 4. & 44. 1.

taketh away.' When God's people under their trials are brought to this submissive frame of spirit it is no unusual thing for him to spare them the crisis which they dreaded, and to restore the beloved object of their affections which they had virtually resigned.

16. *When Joseph saw Benjamin, &c.* They arrive in Egypt without having met with any thing memorable in their journey. Here they are again introduced to Joseph, who looking upon them discovers his brother Benjamin. We can easily conceive that in this interview his eyes would be in danger of betraying his heart: and it was probably in some measure in consequence of this that he instantly gave orders to his steward to take the men home to his house, and prepare a dinner which he would partake with them at noon. This would give him time to compose himself; but there is no doubt he had a farther drift in the measure. He not only desired the pleasure of meeting and conversing at his own table with his youngest brother, but he wished moreover, to observe the conduct of the rest of his brethren toward Benjamin, and to discover whether peculiar honors conferred upon him would excite that envy to which himself had owed so many days of grief. Joseph was not a man who would form an unreasonable suspicion of any person, but after what had already happened, it was a matter of common prudence to obtain good proof of his brethren's reformation. This was desirable not only for

his own sake, but for theirs, and for the sake of his father, who was soon to hear how wickedly they had behaved, and who would be greatly consoled if he heard that they now behaved in a very different way under like temptation.—¶ *Slay, and make ready.* Heb. טבח טבח *teboah tebah, slay a slaughter.* This indicates extraordinary preparations. Flesh is not in common use among the Orientals, and such an order would not be given unless an entertainment of more than usual sumptuousness was to be served up.—¶ *Dine with me.* Heb. יאכלני *yokelu itti, eat with me.*

17. *The man did as Joseph bade, &c.* It would no doubt astonish the ruler of Joseph's house to hear that these strangers, the brothers of Simeon the prisoner, were to have the honor of dining with his master, the lord of Egypt. Had he not known the deference due from servants to masters, he would probably have desired to know the reason of so strange a proceeding; why the governor made such a difference between those men and the many thousands of strangers that came to the country to buy corn. But like a steward that knew his duty, he forbore all inquiries and entered at once upon the execution of his master's order. Heads of households may often have reasons for their commands which they are not required, and which it would not be proper, to communicate even to the most confidential of their domestics.—Joseph's house was un-

18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first

time, are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

doubtedly more like a magnificent palace than like the humble dwellings to which his fathers had been accustomed for more than two hundred years. But perhaps he was not happier in it than Abraham, and Isaac, had been in their tents. The happiness of all these men flowed from their hopes. It was of no very great consequence to them whether they dwelt in palaces of cedar and marble, or in tents of rafters and goat-skins, for they knew that in this world they had no continuing city, but they sought one to come, whose builder and maker was God.

18. *And the men were afraid, &c.* Things still wear to these brethren a mysterious and confounding aspect. That which was meant in love, they construed as a design to ensnare and enslave them. Their accusing consciences represented every thing to them through a disheartening medium. Yet according to the prevailing custom of the East, the very fact that they had been invited to Joseph's table was in itself an encouraging circumstance. Though the Orientals are for the most part a revengeful people, yet if you eat with them, you are thenceforward sure of having their protection. Even should you have done them the greatest injury, yet you need be under no apprehension from their resentment. The Egyptians are not, perhaps, so celebrated for their attention to the rites of hospitality as their nomade neighbors the Arabs, yet it was incredible that such a man as the governor of Egypt, whose character for probity was very high, should invite men to his house with the intention of taking advantage and robbing them of their

asses or of making them slaves. But in their present state of mind they scarcely knew what other construction to put upon it. So unhappy a thing is it to have guilt lying upon the conscience. It deadens the enjoyments of life and embitters its sorrows. It raises fearful apprehensions on the slightest occasions, and continually arrays the Most High in an aspect of wrath. If we wish to be happy let us seek the removal of that never-failing source of misery.—¶ *That he may seek occasion against us.* Heb. *לְהִיטְגוֹלַל עָלֵינוּ lehithgolel alenu, to roll himself upon us, or against us; i. e. by violent oppression; crushing us like a stone rolling down a precipice.* Gr. 'That he may bring a false accusation against us.' Chal. 'That he may domineer over us.' Thus, by a similar metaphor, Prov. 26. 27, 'He that *rolleth a stone*, it will return upon him;' i. e. he that does violent wrong to another, or spreads a slanderous report concerning him, will find it to recoil upon himself. 'To say a man rolls himself upon another, is the eastern way of saying he *falls* upon him. Is a person beaten or injured by another: he says of the other, 'He *rolled* himself upon me.' Of the individual who is always trying to live upon another, who is continually endeavoring to get something out of him, it is said, 'That fellow is for ever rolling himself upon him.' So, also, 'I will not submit to his conduct any longer; I will beat him, and roll myself upon him.' Has a man committed an offence, he is advised to go to the offended, and *roll* himself upon him. A person in great sorrow, who is almost destitute of friends, asks in

19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,

20 And said, O sir, <sup>i</sup> we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

i ch. 42. 3, 10.

his distress, 'Upon whom shall I roll myself?' When men or women are in great misery, they wring their hands and *roll* themselves on the earth. Devotees *roll* themselves round the temple, or after the sacred car.' *Roberts.*

19, 20. *Communed with him at the door of the house, &c.* They would not venture into the house till they had endeavored to banish from his mind the suspicions which he might perhaps entertain of their behavior. They were afraid of sharing the fate of Simeon, or, what was little better, of being made slaves, to the ruin of the families which they had left at home, unless they could satisfy the ruler of Joseph's house concerning their innocence. They lost no time therefore in explaining their own behavior, and rectifying misapprehension if any existed, in the minds of Joseph and of his servants. They had no good reason to believe that these Egyptians were their adversaries, but they could not go into Joseph's house with pleasure till they were assured that neither he nor his people had any thing to lay to their charge. The richest feast will afford little gratification to a troubled mind. 'Who, in India, has not seen similar scenes to this? When people come from a distance to do business, or to have an interview with a person, they do not (if it can be avoided) go to him at once, but try to find out the head servant, and after having made him some little present, try to ascertain the

21 And <sup>k</sup> it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and behold, *every* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.

k ch. 42. 27, 35.

disposition of his master, what are his habits, his possessions, and his family. Every thing connected with the object of their visit is thoroughly *sifted*, so that when they have to meet the individual, they are completely prepared for him.' *Roberts.*

21. *It came to pass, when we came to the inn, &c.* It was well judged in them to volunteer the mention of this matter, that if any thing was afterward said about it by Joseph, they might appeal to the steward, and he could testify in their behalf that, without any accusation they had of their own accord related the whole business to him, and returned the money. The best apology of innocence arraigned is a plain statement of facts.—¶ *We opened our sacks.* We do not read that they opened more than one of their sacks when they came to the inn. We cannot say, however, that they gave a false account of the matter. It is possible that they might open more sacks than one at the inn, though it is not said so; or, the words may signify that they *began* the opening of the sacks at that place, though they did not finish it till they came to their father's house. In like manner, it seems pretty clear that when Paul professed to give an account before Agrippa of the words that Jesus spoke to him in the way to Damascus, he recited not only what was spoken to him in the way, but likewise the words which Jesus spoke to him at Damas-

22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food : we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

23 And he said, Peace be to

you, fear not : your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks : I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

cus, by the mouth of Ananias. Yet no man will say that Paul gave a wrong statement of facts. The words spoken at Damascus were a continuation, and a full explication of what was said to him in the way. Acts, 26. 3—18.

22. *We cannot tell, &c.* This part of the address was discreetly managed. Next in importance to the duty of adhering strictly to the truth in all our attempts to plead our own cause, is the rule that requires us to say simply what is fit and expedient to be said, and nothing more. So far are we from being required to say all we think, that the truth imprudently uttered may sometimes be little better than a lie. A wise man, instead of uttering all his mind, will keep it in till afterward. There was a suspicion in the minds of Jacob's sons, that the money was put into their sacks by one of Joseph's servants ; perhaps by the man himself to whom they were now speaking ; but it would have been very foolish to express their suspicion. It might have kindled up resentment in his mind ; and therefore they say they do not know who did it. It was true they did not know. They only guessed the truth. They wisely forbore therefore any insinuations, and their readiness to make restitution when no man asked it of them, gave the steward reason to believe they were honest men.

23. *And he said, Peace be to you, fear not, &c.* The answer of the steward is very remarkable. Had he been himself in the secret he could scarcely have spoken more suitably. There is no reason to suppose that he knew

these were Joseph's brethren ; yet he knew that they were his countrymen, and perceiving the interest which he took in them, and the air of mystery which attended his conduct towards them, he would be at no loss to conclude that there was no ill design against them. He may have known that the money was returned by Joseph's order, and he knew his master too well to suppose that any injury would accrue to the men on account of what had been done by his direction. His whole address leads us to infer that he had learnt much from his master. He recognises the God of the Hebrews as the God of providence, although when he tells them to dismiss their fears, inasmuch as their God and the God of their fathers had given them this treasure in their sacks, he does not mean that God had put it into their sacks without the intervention of man ; but simply that the matter had been *overruled* so that they should come by it by honorable means.— $\pi$  *I had your money.* Heb.  $\text{כַּסְפֶּכֶם בָּא אֵיךְ}$  *kaspekem ba ei, your money came to me.* That is, you cannot be called to account for the money, for I had it. Whatever became of it afterwards, I hereby acknowledge the receipt of it for the corn. You are credited with payment in full ; therefore give yourselves no uneasiness on that score. In all this we cannot but recognise the fruits of Joseph's instructions to his steward. Happy was he in being in the service of such a man. Joseph, no doubt, delighted to speak of his God, and the God of his fathers, and his steward appears to have learnt his sen-

24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

1 ch. 18. 4. & 24. 32.

timents and his language. Many have received their knowledge and impressions of religion in families where divine providence placed them as servants, and they would not have exchanged the benefits derived from that servitude for all the riches of the earth. If masters and mistresses were more faithful to their domestics, doubtless they would more frequently find themselves the instruments of eternal good to their souls.—But the steward, to render the ten brethren still more at ease, brings forth Simeon from his confinement, and as this would naturally be understood as having been done in pursuance of Joseph's order, it would be regarded as a proof of his being satisfied. To Simeon himself the pleasure of being released and of beholding his brethren, was a rich compensation for the pain of confinement, but a still richer did he receive from the happy effects of his affliction, if he made that improvement of it which Joseph intended, and which reason and religion prescribed. His brethren, on the other hand, were happy to find him restored to their society. They remembered their father's words, 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away.' Although they had no hope of ever being able to restore Joseph, they pleased themselves with the hope of hearing their father in a few days blessing God, and thanking them for bringing up Simeon and Benjamin again to his arms. The irretrievable loss of Joseph would be thought of by their father with the less regret, when two other sons were restored to

25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

26 ¶ And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into

his arms, about whose fate he was long in suspense. Thus the clouds which had hitherto darkened their horizon, began in a very slight degree to break away, but some time was yet to intervene before the full noonday light burst upon them.

24, 25. *And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, &c.* While Joseph was occupied in his various concerns, and thinking how he should conduct himself toward his brethren, they were busy in washing and dressing themselves to appear before him, and in preparing the present which they had brought him. Though they were in a great measure relieved from their painful apprehensions by the courtesy of the ruler of Joseph's house, yet they were still anxious about the reception they should meet with from his master. They could not understand for what reason they were singled out from all other strangers to the honor of dining with him. But whatever might be his reasons for inviting them to his table, they hope their present will recommend them to his favor, and that it may be acceptable they know it should be given with a good grace. We may imagine them, therefore, drawing forth from their baggage the balm, and the honey, the precious fruits, the spices, and the gums, which they had brought, arranging them in proper order, and consulting with what bodily posture and what form of words they should beg his acceptance of them.

26. *And when Joseph came home, &c.* Joseph knew that the present



the house, and <sup>m</sup> bowed themselves to him to the earth.

27 And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is* your father well, the old man <sup>a</sup> of whom ye spake? *Is* he yet alive?

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, he *is* yet alive: <sup>o</sup> and

<sup>m</sup> ch. 37. 7, 10. <sup>n</sup> ch. 42. 11, 13. <sup>o</sup> ch. 37. 7, 10.

was an evidence rather of their fear than of their love. But he could excuse that fear which his own policy had occasioned. He hoped soon to gain his brethren's love by discovering his own. In the mean time, as it was obvious that his brethren were acting with the concurrence and by the direction of their father, how would Joseph's heart be melted at the thought that his anxious father was now, without knowing it, attempting to soften his heart in the same method as he had long before done that of Esau, by a rich present! But there was still more in the incident than a proof of Jacob's wish to conciliate the lord of Egypt. The giving of costly presents was and ever has been in that quarter of the world, *the usual token of homage to superiors*. As this present came from Jacob by the hand of his sons, Joseph's dream might now be considered as verified, that the sun, moon, and eleven stars did obeisance to him. When his brethren bowed down themselves to the earth before him, they humbly solicited his favor for their father as well as for themselves. What the import of this gesture was, we may learn from Isaiah's predictions concerning the homage that was to be paid by the Gentiles to Zion and her king. —Is. 45. 14.—60. 14.—49. 22, 23.

27, 28. And he asked them of *their* welfare. Heb. לְשָׁלוֹם *leshalom*, 'to

they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, <sup>p</sup> his mother's son, and said, *Is* this your younger brother, <sup>q</sup> of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

<sup>p</sup> ch. 35. 17, 18. <sup>q</sup> ch. 42. 13.

*peace*; i. e. as to their peace or welfare, as explained above in the note on Gen. 29.6.—וְהָאֵלֹהִים *Is your father well?* Heb. הַשָּׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם *ha-shalom abikem*, *is there peace to your father?* The presentation of the gifts in the name of Jacob would naturally pave the way to some inquiries respecting him; and it is observable how adroitly he supports the character which he had assumed, that of an Egyptian nobleman, who remembered what they had said about a venerable old man, of whose welfare he now politely asks. They in their answer give Joseph the intelligence that would most delight his heart, and at the same time by calling their father his 'servant,' and a second time bowing and doing obeisance, they may be said again to have confirmed the previous fulfilment of the dream.

29, 30. He lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin. He seems to have noticed Benjamin before upon his first arrival, v. 16, but perhaps distrust in his command of his feelings, he seems in the interval to have put himself especially on his guard. But now the sight of him again awakens too many tender recollections to be resisted. His countenance brought to mind their common mother and her premature loss. He thought of the partial affection of their kind father, and of the present anxiety and distress of the venerable man. He reverted to

30 And Joseph made haste; for <sup>v</sup>his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and <sup>v</sup>wept there.

31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on <sup>v</sup>bread.

r 1 Kings 3. 26. s ch. 42. 24. t ver. 25.

his own strange eventful history, and thence to the exposedness of his beloved brother to dangers that had almost proved fatal to himself. The consequence was a rush of emotions upon his mind too powerful to be suppressed. After uttering a benediction which under the disguise of a good wish from a stranger, was in reality the effusion of a bursting heart, he was obliged to retire in order to throw a veil over those feelings which must otherwise have betrayed the secret that for the present he designs to keep. He withdraws therefore to give vent to his tears in a private place; and however bitter were the tears which he had formerly shed when exiled from all that was dear to him on earth, he now shed tears of joy of proportionable sweetness. His grief for what was past was now swallowed up in the ecstasy of what was present, and what was to come.—¶ *His bowels did yearn upon his brother.* Heb. נִכְמְרוּ *nikmeru*, did burn, were kindled. Thus Hos. 11. 8, 'Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are *kindled* (נִכְמְרוּ *nikmeru*) together.' The term occurs elsewhere only 1 Kings 3. 2. Sam. 5. 10. Gr. and Chal. 'Were turned.' Vulg. 'Were moved.'

31. *And he washed his face, &c.* Having recomposed himself, he returns to the company, and resuming the Egyptian, commands the entertainment to be served up, during which he has sufficient self-command to do the

32 And they set on for himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that *is* <sup>v</sup>an abomination unto the Egyptians.

v ch. 46. 34, Exod. 8. 26.

honors of it in the most becoming manner. Throughout the whole scene Joseph wins equally upon our love and our respect. We love him for the warm sensibility of his heart, and we respect him as one who knows both when and where to weep, and who could refrain himself, and appear cheerful when it was fit. While tears shed on proper occasions throw a grace over the manliest character, we should still bear it in mind that there is not only 'a time to weep, but also a time to laugh; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,' and that he whose tears are not in some measure under the control of his judgment, is rather a child than a man.

32. *And they set on for him by himself, &c.* Heb. יָסִימוּ *yasimu*, they set, placed, stationed; i. e. not so properly the dishes, as the tables, or the general eating apparatus. One was set for himself, one for the strangers, and one for the Egyptians. This was undoubtedly a device to stimulate their curiosity in respect to himself. That the Egyptians and Hebrews should eat apart they could easily account for; but who or what is the man? Is he not an Egyptian? Yet if he be, why eat by himself? Surely he must be a foreigner.—¶ *The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews.* Heb. לֹא יֹאכְלוּ *lo yukelun*, were not able to eat; i. e. it was contrary to established usage, and this usage carried with it such a *binding authority* to their con-

33 And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

34 And he took *and sent mess-*

es unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was  $\times$  five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

$\times$  ch. 45. 22.

sciences that they felt a moral inability to disregard it. See Note on Gen. 29. 8. The reason of this it is, at the present day, extremely difficult to ascertain. Some, following the interpretation of the Chaldee, suppose that the Hebrews were accustomed to eat the animals which the Egyptians worshipped as gods. But it is not certain that at this early period brute-worship was established in that country, and we cannot at any rate suppose that any of the Egyptian gods were served up at that table where the Egyptians sat as guests. It is perhaps more probable that the Hebrews were reckoned impure by the Egyptians because they did not observe those ceremonies in eating, which made a part of the religion of Egypt. It is well known that most ancient heathen nations were wont to honor their gods at their tables by observances, which they thought no religious person would neglect. We pity their blindness, but we read in their conduct a rebuke of multitudes in christian lands, who show less respect at their tables to the God of all their mercies, than the heathen showed to these vanities, that could neither do good nor evil.

33. *And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright, &c.* Not only was the order of the tables, but the order also in which they themselves were seated, a matter of surprise to Joseph's brethren. They were astonished to find every man placed *according to his age*. Who can this be, they would say to themselves, that is

so well acquainted with our ages as to be able to adjust our places in this manner? Surely it must be some one who knows us, though we know not him. Or is he a diviner? Who or what can he be? They might well be said to have marvelled at one another. It was marvellous that they did not hence suspect who he really was.

34. *And he took and sent messes unto them from before him, &c.* It was, and still is, the custom in the countries of the East, for the master of the house to testify his regard for his guests, by sending messes to them of that food which is served up for himself. Mr. Carne remarks that being hospitably entertained by an Egyptian Aga, he received from his host the choicest pieces of meat, which he took up with his fingers and placed before the guest; and that on another occasion, when stopping for the night in an empty khan or inn, one of the travellers, wishing to give him a proof of his respect, threw him a piece of meat, though at the distance of several yards. There is no reason to suppose that Benjamin ate more than the rest, but Joseph sent him the large mess as a mark of special favor. In this it is probable that it was his real design to try whether the superior honors conferred upon Benjamin would kindle up envy in their breasts against him. Joseph had had too good reason to know, that men are naturally envious of the distinctions bestowed upon those whom they are accustomed to consider as their equals or inferiors. He would have proof

## CHAPTER XLIV.

AND he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with food*, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

therefore that his brethren had subdued the envious dispositions they formerly cherished, if they should still retain the warm affection of brothers to Benjamin, after he had been distinguished with peculiar honors by the lord of Egypt.—¶ *They drank, and were merry with him.* Heb. יִשְׁכְּרוּ עִמּוֹ *yishkeru immo, drank largely with him*; i. e. freely, but not to intoxication. The original שָׁכַר *shakar* properly means *to drink abundantly, to drink to exhilaration or merriment*; but as it appears from Gen. 40. 11, that the Egyptians were accustomed at this time to drink the fresh juice of the grape before it had fermented and thus generated alcohol, they were in little danger of intoxication even from the largest quantity they could drink of such a harmless beverage. The term is elsewhere employed to signify that cheerful enjoyment of God's good creatures which is perfectly consistent with the laws of the strictest sobriety. Thus, Cant. 5. 1, 'Drink, (שֶׁתֵּהוּ *shethu*) yea, drink abundantly (שִׁכְרוּ *shikru*), O beloved.' Here the two words in the original are the very same as those used in the passage before us, and surely our blessed Lord would not borrow images from the vile debaucheries of revellers and drunkards to illustrate his grace and kindness to the persons whom he loves. Thus too in the account of the marriage-feast at Cana of Galilee, John 2. 10, when Jesus turned water into wine, the word which we render 'have well drunk' (μεθυσθῶσιν) answers in meaning to the Heb. word used in this place. But it would be

2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money: and he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

blasphemy against Christ to allege that he turned water into wine to supply the extravagant cravings of a licentious appetite. In like manner, it would be a violation of that respect which we owe to Joseph's memory, to suppose that he either encouraged or allowed an excessive use of liquor at his table. He would certainly much rather have exposed himself to the censure or displeasure of the noblest guests, by restraining debauchery, than to the displeasure of the Most High God, by giving countenance to those fleshly indulgences which his law condemns; and so would any right-minded man. God is a gracious Master. He allows a cheerful use of the good things of this life, but his goodness is abused and insulted, if we take occasion from his liberality to fulfil the lusts of the flesh

## CHAPTER XLIV.

1, 2. *And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, &c.* Joseph here has recourse to another expedient still longer to detain his brethren and more effectually to bring them to a proper spirit. His immediate object in the present step seems to have been to try still farther their temper towards Benjamin. If they discovered little or no concern for his affliction, it would be too evident that they still lived under the influence of that selfish and envious spirit which prompted them to sell himself into Egypt. But if they should discover a strong desire to preserve Benjamin, it might be presumed that their dispositions were improved, and that they could entertain the affection

3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they, and their asses.

4 And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and

when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

5 Is not this *it* in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

of a brother towards one whom their father loved above themselves. But while we can easily see why Joseph put the silver cup into Benjamin's sack, it is not so easy to conjecture the reasons for his ordering each man's money to be put in the mouth of his sack. Joseph, no doubt, would have scorned the idea of requiring the ordinary price, or any price, for that food with which he wished to sustain his father's household; but his generous intentions do not account for a manner of restoring their corn-money, which he foresaw would fill them with amazement and distress. The pain of such uneasiness as they would feel, was too high a price for the money which Joseph restored. The reason of the proceeding probably was, that they might have no grounds to suspect Benjamin as the real thief of the cup. While he wished to have a pretence for detaining Benjamin, he did not wish that they should have reason to suspect that he was really guilty. His desire was to find his brethren disposed to defend Benjamin in a just cause, from that oppression to which he seemed to be exposed. If there had been too great appearance of guilt in their eyes, they might have been excused if they had left him to the just punishment of his crime. In all this Joseph's conduct was governed by the circumstances under which it occurred. It will not justify us for resorting to like measures when there is not the like occasion. We are not to devise methods to expiure the secret principles by which our friends are ac-

tuated, when they have given us no good reason to form suspicions concerning them.

3. *As soon as the morning was light, &c.* Joseph's brethren, being early dismissed, set out on their journey with cheerful spirits. Simeon is restored, Benjamin is safe, and they are well laden with provision for the family. They would now be ready to anticipate the pleasure of seeing their father, and of easing his anxious heart. But the most beautiful morning may soon be overcast with dark clouds. Joseph was preparing for them grief and fear, although he intended good and not harm. Let us never be too confident that to-morrow will be as this day, or that this day will be serene and bright till the evening.

4, 5. *And when they were gone out of the city, &c.* Scarcely have they left the precincts of the city, when the steward overtakes them, and charges them with the heinous crime of having stolen his lord's cup, by which we are to understand, according to the force of the original, a large deep goblet, out of which the wine was poured into the drinking-vessel. This was a crime which would have been highly offensive at any time, but pre-eminently so after the generous treatment they had now received.—¶ *Whereby indeed he divineth.* Heb. נָחַשׁ יִנְחֵשׁ *nahesh yenahesh bo, searching maketh search by it*; i. e. learns experimentally by means of it. The original term נָחַשׁ *nahash*, from which comes the Heb. word for *serpent*, Gen. 3. 1, signifies

6 ¶ And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

7 And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

primarily a close scrutinizing search, and secondarily the practice of divination or augury. The use of the term by the steward does not imply that Joseph ordinarily made use of the diviner's art; but as it had probably been attributed to him, on account of his great wisdom, by the Egyptians, he merely takes advantage of the fact to accomplish a particular purpose, without leaving us any ground to infer that the popular impression was either true or false. In addressing Joseph's brethren in this manner, we think it probable that the steward alluded to the circumstances that occurred at the entertainment the day before. It is natural to suppose that he would have had his cup before him on that occasion if ever, and as he had appeared to discern their relative seniority by some supernatural means, we may easily conceive that the steward's phrase would convey to them the impression, that it was owing to some mysterious magical virtue in the cup. All this could no doubt be said without any impeachment of his piety, and we have therefore no occasion to resort to any of the various renderings which have been suggested in order to save the credit of Joseph as an upright man. It was certainly as harmless a device as that of his feigning to be a stranger to his brethren and keeping them so long in ignorance of his real character.

6. And he overtook them, &c. What Joseph designed by this step it was perhaps impossible for the steward to guess, but he was persuaded that his

8 Behold, \* the money which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

a ch. 43. 21.

master was too good a man to enlist him in an iniquitous scheme. Men of known integrity enjoy this privilege, that their character in the main secures them against suspicions of dishonesty, even when they behave in such a way as might expose other men to suspicion. Relying on the justice and wisdom of his master, therefore, the steward dexterously seconded his designs, and appeared so much in earnest, that no doubt seems to have been entertained of his sincerity by Joseph's brethren. But they thought themselves able to give satisfactory evidence of their integrity.

7, 8. God forbid that thy servants should do, &c. The sons of Jacob were chargeable in the sight of God with many sins. They were conscious of as great crimes as this which was now laid to their charge, or rather of crimes vastly greater, and yet they were thunderstruck at the present accusation, and expressed the utmost abhorrence of such a conduct. 'God forbid,' or Heb. 'Far be it from thy servants, that they should do according to this thing.' Could they be so base and so wicked as to steal a favorite cup from the great man who had treated them with such distinction? Was it possible that they should abuse his goodness to an opportunity of pilfering the most precious furniture of that table at which they had been honored with a place? In order to strengthen their denial, they appeal to a fact with which the steward was well acquainted, viz. their having brought again the

9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, <sup>b</sup> both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bond-men.

10 And he said, Now also *let it be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11 Then they speedily took

b ch. 31. 32.

money which they had found in their sacks. Did this conduct comport with the character of thieves? It is the great advantage of those whose past conduct has been unrepachable that they can produce it as a witness in their favor when falsely accused or unjustly suspected. In all their late intercourse with Joseph their behavior had been upright and honorable. Through some oversight their money had been restored to them, which they brought back and returned when it was not sought. How, then, could it be believed that they would now seize upon what had never belonged to them, especially when they had no reason to expect that they would escape detection, disgrace, and punishment? A good name justly acquired will repel groundless charges that might otherwise be of the most serious injury to our reputation.

9. *With whomsoever*, &c. Jacob's sons could confide in one another. Notwithstanding all that was past, yet they were all persuaded that none of them would degrade themselves so far as to put their hands upon what was not their own. They were so confident of one another's integrity, that they could risk their own liberty upon it. They unanimously doomed the thief, and themselves to slavery, if he was found among their number. Yet they were doubtless too rash in proffer-

down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

12 And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

13 Then they <sup>c</sup> rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

c ch. 37. 29, 34. Num. 14. 6. 2 Sam. 1. 11.

ing to subject themselves to such a penalty. It was indeed brotherly conduct to express such a firm confidence in one another's innocence, but the money which they had formerly found in the mouths of their sacks, might have taught them, that the cup in question might likewise have been put into the sack of one of them, without any fault on his part. He that is hasty with his tongue, often erreth.

10. *And he said, Now also let it be*, &c. The steward takes the sons of Jacob at their word, so far only as justice allowed. He will have the sacks searched, that it may be known whether any of them had taken the cup; but he will not, as they proposed, punish the innocent with the guilty, nor will he punish the guilty so rigorously as they proposed. When others speak rashly, we ought not to take advantage of their rashness, for we ourselves have no doubt often come under engagements without due deliberation, of which others, if they had been disposed, might have availed themselves greatly to our injury.

11. *Then they speedily took down*, &c. With the steward's proposal they readily acquiesce and with indignant sensations unlade every man his beast, in order to disprove the charge. A few moments, they thought, would be sufficient for the full proof of their innocence. But their faces were covered

14 ¶ And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house, (for he *was* yet there :) and they <sup>d</sup>fell before him on the ground.

d ch. 37. 7.

with shame when they saw what they did not expect to find.

12, 13. *The cup was found in Benjamin's sack.* Joseph's steward might have begun with the sack of the youngest, and saved himself the trouble of searching so many sacks in vain; but he thought it necessary still to put on the appearance of justice, although he knew he could not deceive the brethren, nor is it likely that he wished them to be deceived. Ten out of eleven are clear, and enjoy the triumph of a good conscience; but lo, in the sack of the youngest the cup is found! How soon was their joy turned into mourning, and their cheerful hopes into dismal fears! And what shall they now do? There was apparent danger in their returning to the city. Snares, it was too obvious, were laid for Benjamin. And what if all of them should be involved in these snares? Was it not safest to leave Benjamin to his fate, and to secure themselves by a speedy flight? But their bowels yearned over their poor brother, and over their father, who would be inconsolable under his loss. Rather than see the misery of their father, they will return, and try what can be done to save Benjamin. Thus they might not only make some little compensation to their father for bereaving him of Joseph, but they would also, by shewing themselves so deeply interested in Benjamin's misfortune dissipate Joseph's remaining doubts concerning them, and in a great measure repay him for all the injuries he had experienced at their hands.

14. *And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house, &c.* Joseph

15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed *is* this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

probably remained at his house anxiously expecting their return, and the first thing they did upon their arrival was to fall down prostrate before him, doing obeisance again in the name of their father and their own. Judah is particularly mentioned because it was he who had persuaded Jacob to send Benjamin into Egypt, and he would feel that the chief responsibility rested upon him. But neither he nor his brethren seem capable of uttering a word. They can only wait in their humble posture to hear what is said to them. 'Thus,' says an ancient father, 'they bow down to him whom they sold into slavery lest they should bow down to him.'

15. *Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?* Here again it would seem that Joseph avails himself of the reputation in which he was popularly held. We cannot understand it as implying a claim on his part to the character of a real diviner. It is very possible that the Egyptian language had not words to distinguish between the pretended arts of their diviners, and the true gift of prophecy, with which the Hebrew patriarchs were blessed. As the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Jehovah are called by the general name of *prophets*, so the Egyptians might give to such a prophet as Joseph appeared to be, the same appellation which they gave to their own pretended prophets. Joseph, therefore, when he ostensibly laid claim to what was called divination in Egypt, did not mean that he was a diviner of the same kind with those of Egypt, but simply one that had the gift of discovering



16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found.

e ver. 9.

Things hidden from other men. Was it not to be supposed that he who could foretel that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine, could also discover the pilferer of the cup out of which he drank? How vain then would it be to think of escaping with his property in their hands undetected? It is plain, however, that he is merely carrying on to its final developement the trial which he was making of the temper of his brethren. He put on a stern aspect, and upbraided them with a pretended crime, but it was to give them occasion to show forth their innocence and their repentance.

16. *And Judah said, &c.* It was no doubt by common consent that Judah took the lead and acted as spokesman on this occasion. No wonder that he was at a loss what to say. How could he justify or excuse Benjamin without seeming to criminate the governor, whose favor it was so necessary to court? But if he confessed that his brother were guilty of the baseness imputed to him, how could he, in view of such black ingratitude, claim any favor for him? His perplexity was indeed excruciating. On the one hand, appearances were so strongly against Benjamin as to warrant his detention, and yet how could they return without him? What can he say or do? He can only suggest that it is a mysterious providence, in which it appears to be the design of God to

17 And he said, 'God forbid that I should do so: *but* the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

f Prov. 17. 15.

punish them for their *former crimes*. In saying 'God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants,' he does not mean to plead guilty to the present charge, nor make a *definite* acknowledgment of any particular offence, but to say in general, that it was in consequence of former misdeeds that God had suffered them to fall into this unhappy predicament, and to express a willingness that he should punish them in this way, if he saw fit. They well knew that they had sold Joseph for a slave, and filled up many of the years of their father's life with bitter anguish, and they admit that it were a righteous thing with God to make them all slaves for crimes which their consciences charged upon them, but of which they supposed Joseph to be profoundly ignorant. If Joseph had really been the character which he appeared to be, such an answer would have gone far towards disarming him of his resentment. The simple and genuine utterance of the heart is the most irresistible of all eloquence.

17. *And he said, God forbid that I should do so, &c.* The words both of Joseph and the steward, v. 10, declare their detestation of extending punishment beyond the offence or the offender. Joseph had no complaint against Benjamin's brethren, and therefore they might return in peace to their father. But what an alternative was this! Better all be detained than he; for it will in all probability be the death

18 ¶ Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and \* let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou *art* even as Pharaoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother ?

g ch. 18. 30, 32. Exod. 32. 22.

of their father. Joseph, however, had the pleasure to find that his permission to return was not accepted.

18. *Judah came near unto him and said, &c.* The surety here becomes the advocate, and presents one of the most powerful pleas ever uttered. Though he knew nothing of the schools or the rules of the rhetoricians, yet no orator ever pronounced a more moving oration. His good sense, and his affection for his venerable father, taught him the highest strains of eloquence. Learning that one only of their number was to be detained he conceives a hope of releasing Benjamin, and accordingly forms his speech with the most admirable adroitness to compass this end with the governor of Egypt.—‘A company of people have always some one among them, who is known and acknowledged to be the *chief speaker*; thus, should they fall into trouble, he will be the person to come forward and plead with the superior. He will say, ‘*My lord*, I am indeed a very ignorant person, and not worthy to speak to you: were I of high caste, perhaps my lord would hear me. May I say two or three words?’ (some of the party will then say, ‘Yes, yes, our lord will hear you.’) He then proceeds:—‘Ah, my lord, your mercy is known to all; great is your wisdom; you are even as a king to us: let, then, your servants find favor in your sight.’

28\*

20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and <sup>h</sup> a child of his old age, a little one: and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, <sup>i</sup> Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

h ch. 37. 3. i ch. 42. 15, 20.

He then, like Judah, relates the whole affair, forgetting no circumstance which has a tendency to exculpate him and his companions; and every thing which can *touch the feelings* of his judge will be gently brought before him. As he draws to a conclusion, his pathos increases, his companions put out their heads in a supplicating manner, accompanied by other gesticulations; their tears begin to flow, and with one voice they cry, ‘Forgive us, *this time*, and we will never offend you more.’ *Roberts*.—¶ *Thou art even as Pharaoh*. That is, invested with all but royal authority; having the power to punish and to pardon; standing in the place of Pharaoh, and therefore to be equally revered.

19—21. *My lord asked his servants, &c.* Judah, it will be observed, closes his pathetic address, v. 33, with the request to be permitted to remain instead of Benjamin. In order to introduce and enforce this petition, he here enters upon a detailed statement of facts sufficient to have moved a heart of stone. Some of these facts Joseph had heard before, when his brethren had no such purpose as the present to serve by relating them. He had been informed by them that they had a younger brother, the only surviving son of a much-loved mother, and therefore doubly dear to his gray-haired father. If Joseph then had any regard for venerable

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, *his father* would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, \* Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And <sup>1</sup>our father said, Go again, *and* buy us a little food.

26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother

be with us, then will we go down for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother *be* with us.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that <sup>m</sup> my wife bare me two *sons*:

28 And the one went out from me, and I said, <sup>n</sup> Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:

29 And if ye <sup>o</sup> take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

k ch. 43. 3, 5. l ch. 43. 2.

m ch. 46. 19. n ch. 37. 33. o ch. 42. 36, 38.

age, any pity for an old man whose life was bound up in the life of his son, he would not bereave him of the solace of his declining days.—¶ *Bring him down unto me that I may set mine eyes upon him.* Gr. 'And I will have a care of him.' The phrase 'to set one's eyes upon a person,' is evidently synonymous, in the following passages, with 'exercising a tender care towards him.' Jer. 39. 12, 'Take him and *look well* to him, and do him no harm;' Heb. '*set thine eyes* upon him.' Jer. 40. 4, 'If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will *look well* unto thee;' Heb. 'I will *set mine eyes* upon thee.' 'Has a beloved son been long absent, does the father anxiously desire to see him, he says, 'Bring him, bring him, that the course of mine eyes may be upon him.' 'Ah, mine eyes, do you again see my son? Oh, mine eyes, is not this pleasure for you?' *Roberts.*

22. *The lad cannot leave his father.* That is, his father cannot consent to part with him. The inability was rather on the part of Jacob than of Benjamin; but the idea is sufficiently obvious. He is called a 'lad' from his

being the youngest of the brethren, though he was now married and had ten children, Gen. 46. 21. So the three companions of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, though old enough to be 'set over the affairs of the province,' yet are spoken of as the three *children* who were cast into the fiery furnace. See Note on Gen 22. 5.

27—29. *Ye know that my wife bare me, &c.* Sorrow is ever entitled to respect. No one possessed of the common feelings of humanity but will be disposed to alleviate the grief of him whom God has wounded by singular afflictions. He must have the spirit of a fiend who wilfully doubles those sorrows of an innocent man which are already great. It is a dreadful affliction to have one of two favorite sons torn in pieces by wild beasts. The person who, without indispensable necessity, bereaves him of the other is more merciless than the beasts of prey which deprived him of the first. Judah was far from thinking that the brother supposed by the father to be torn of wild beasts, was the very man before whom he was now pleading with such affectionate earnestness. Yet it is ob-

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad *be* not with us; (seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;)

31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father,

p 1 Sam. 18. 1.

servable that he said nothing but what was true, although he did not tell all the truth. It was not to be expected that he would tell how Benjamin's brother was lost. He only told his father's opinion concerning it, and that was enough to melt any man's heart into compassion for a father bereaved in such a cruel manner of one son, and trembling in apprehension of the loss of another. He had indeed many other sons left, but none of them by the best-beloved of his wives. When he lost the son whom he believed to have been the prey of ravenous beasts, his body was not so much enfeebled by the infirmities of age. But in his present state of weakness, it was impossible, to all appearance, that he could survive a second shock more grievous than the first.

30, 31. *Seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life.* Or, Heb. נפשו בנפשו קשורה בנפשו *naphsho keshurah benapsho, his soul is bound up in his (the lad's) soul.* Gr. 'His soul hangeth on this man's soul.' Chal. 'His (Benjamin's) soul is beloved unto him as his own soul.' If we love our lives or if we regard the commandment which requires us to use all lawful endeavors to preserve them, let us beware of immoderate attachment to any worldly

saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bond-man to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

q ch. 43. 9. r Exod. 32. 32.

object. If our lives are bound up in any created enjoyment in this changeable world, we subject not only our peace and comfort, but our lives themselves, to great hazard. Jacob's life was bound up in the life of Benjamin, and therefore there was great danger, if any mischief had befallen the young man, that his father's precious life would have been cut off by insupportable grief. Many parents have, without intending it, shortened their days, by giving an unbounded scope to parental fondness. We pity them, but we cannot commend them. They reap according to that they have sown.

33, 34. *Let thy servant abide instead of the lad.* Judah became bound to restore Benjamin to his father, and he wishes to perform his word although by his fidelity he should make himself a slave for life. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not, is a man of tried integrity. Comparatively but little praise is due to him who keeps his promises when he has no temptation to break them. But that man is a lover of truth and righteousness, who prefers a pure conscience, not only to gold and silver, but to his pleasure, his family, his liberty, and his life. It is probably to be inferred that Judah had not at this time a wife, as otherwise it

## CHAPTER XLV.

**T**HEN Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried,

would not have been his duty to come under engagements that might separate him from her. He had three children, but these he might safely leave to the care of his father and his brethren, especially his younger brother, whose liberty he was willing to redeem with his own. There was no duty that imperiously prohibited him from taking the place of his unfortunate brother. He was so far master of his own liberty that he could warrantably put himself in Benjamin's room if the governor gave his consent. But let it not be thought from this that Judah was insensible to the sweets of liberty. Liberty was no doubt dear to him, but his father's comfort was dearer. Much rather would he have chosen to continue in Egypt as a slave, excluded from the society of his father, his brethren, his children, than to return without Benjamin, and see the grief that would soon put an end to his father's life. Such an example of filial affection has strong claims to our attention. Those children who have yet the pleasure of seeing their fathers in the land of the living, may hence learn what value to put upon this blessing and what regard they ought to pay to the happiness of those that brought them into the world. Shall they not do what they can to make the lives of those men pleasant, without whom they themselves would not have tasted the pleasure of living? Let them not say that their fathers have not treated them with that kindness which he shows some of his brothers or sisters; that he has his favorites in the family. Judah saw plainly that Benjamin was loved far above himself, or

Cause every man to go out from me: and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

any of his brethren by the same mother. Jacob made no secret of his parental tenderness for Benjamin. Yet Judah is so far from repining at the superiority of his father's regard for Benjamin, that he is willing to become a slave for him, because his father would be less hurt by his misfortunes than by Benjamin's. How different was the spirit which he now discovered, from that which appeared in the sons of Jacob when they sold Joseph into Egypt *because* their father loved him better than themselves! Now Judah is willing himself to become a slave in Egypt for Benjamin simply for the reason that his father loved Benjamin better than himself! Blessed be God, that though that which has been done cannot be undone, yet the doers of evil may be made in God's sight as though they had not done it! 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.' Let not penitents be upbraided with their old sins. They are not what they once were; and when their iniquities are sought for they shall not be found.—¶ *The evil that shall come upon my father.* Heb. אֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא אֶת אָבִי *asher yimtza eth abi*, which shall find my father; i. e. which shall befall or invade my father. Thus, 1 Chrn. 10. 3, 'And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers *hit* him.' Heb. 'found him.' Ps. 116. 3, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell *gat hold* upon me.' Heb. 'found me.'

## CHAPTER XLV.

THE present chapter brings us at length to the winding up of this 'strange eventful history.' The purposes of Jo

2 And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his

brethren, \*I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

a Acts 7. 13.

seph, or rather of that providence whose minister he was, in subjecting the sons of Jacob to such a series of trials and vexations, are answered, and all things are now ready for the final grand discovery. The speech of Judah recorded in the last chapter had evidently penetrated the heart of Joseph. He had heard enough, and more than enough, to satisfy him that his brethren sincerely loved Benjamin and their father. The affectionate manner in which Jacob was mentioned; the unfeigned earnestness expressed to save him from the impending blow; the generosity of Judah's offer to put himself in Benjamin's place; all this assures him that time, affliction, and a sense of duty, had introduced another and happier spirit into the family. Joseph's heart accordingly was strongly agitated by the tenderest and most powerful emotions, filial and fraternal love, compassion, joy, and grief. He could contain himself no longer. He felt that he must give way to the insuppressible burst of nature, and no longer defer the pleasure which he should both give and receive while he stood revealed before his brethren as the LONG-LOST JOSEPH.

1. *Cause every man to go out from me.* The curiosity of the domestics must have been greatly excited by the unaccountable peculiarity of his behavior to those strangers from Canaan, but he does not choose to have any spectators to the tender scene before him, except those who were to be actors in it. The heart does not like to have its stronger emotions exposed to the view of many witnesses. Moreover,

had his servants been present they must soon have learned what treatment Joseph once received from his brethren; and it was not to be expected that they would so easily forgive the injuries done to their lord, as their lord himself could do. Joseph with his characteristic generosity determines at once to spare the feelings of his brethren and consult their reputation, by having all spectators removed.

2. *And he wept aloud.* Heb. יתן קולו בבכי *yitten eth kolo bivki*, gave forth his voice in weeping. 'In this way do they speak of a person who thus conducts himself: 'How loudly did he give forth his voice and weep.' 'That child is for ever giving forth its voice.' This violence of their sorrow is very great, and their voice may be heard at a considerable distance.' *Roberts*. Joseph probably was scarcely able to articulate the orders for all his servants to leave the presence-chamber, when the uncontrollable emotions that wrought in his bosom found vent in a flood of tears. Had he been less moved these tears might have flowed in silence. But he broke forth in a loud weeping, so that the Egyptians from without heard him. But if their minds were filled with amazement, and a desire to know the cause of this strange affair, how must his brethren within have been overwhelmed with surprise to witness such a burst of sorrow from him, who, but a while before, was all sternness and severity! But the mystery is soon to be solved.

3. *And Joseph said unto his brethren, &c.* We can easily conceive that

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near: and he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, <sup>b</sup> whom ye sold into Egypt.

b ch. 37. 23.

Joseph's voice must for a time have been so obstructed by his feelings as to render articulation impossible. But when at length he found the power of utterance, his first astounding words were, I AM JOSEPH!!! and in the next breath pours out his heart in the tender enquiry, *DOTH MY FATHER YET LIVE?*—after which we may suppose his voice again smothered in sobs, and a fresh flood of tears streaming from his eyes. His brethren, on the other hand, struck dumb with astonishment, oppressed with shame, stung with remorse, petrified with terror, are unable to utter a word. Had their brother been actually dead, and risen again and appeared before them, their feelings would scarcely have been different from what they were. The rush of thoughts which would at once crowd in upon their minds, is past description. They were covered with confusion on finding themselves in the presence of the man whom they had hated without a cause, and upon whom they had heaped such accumulated wrongs. Yet the words, the looks, the gushing tears of their brother indicate any thing but a purpose of vengeance, and the encouragement they would take from those outward signs is strongly confirmed by what immediately follows.

4, 5. *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near me, &c.* His brethren being unable to make any reply, their silence affords to Joseph an opportunity to administer to them the strongest of all consolation. A spirit less magnanimous than his might have been

5 Now therefore <sup>c</sup> be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: <sup>d</sup> for God did send me before you to preserve life.

c Isa. 40. 2. 2 Cor. 2. 7. d ch. 50. 20. Ps. 105. 16, 17. 2 Sam. 16. 10, 11. Acts 4. 24.

disposed, in the midst of all its sympathy, to enjoy the triumph which he now had over them and to make them feel it. But he has made them feel sufficiently already; and having forgiven them in his heart, he remembers their sin no more, but is full of tender solicitude to calm their troubled spirits. He bids them approach him and again assures them that he is their brother—the brother whom they sold into Egypt. This painful event he seems to have mentioned, not in order to stir up new anguish in their minds, but for the sake of convincing them that it was he himself, their *brother* Joseph, and not another; and lest the mention of it should be taken as a reflection, and so add to their distress, he immediately follows it up with a dissuasive from overmuch sorrow; 'Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves,' &c. In this soothing and tender strain did he pour balm into their wounded hearts. A less delicate mind would have talked of *forgiving* them; but he entreats them to *forgive* themselves, as though *his* forgiveness was out of the question. There was indeed sufficient reason for them to be grieved and to be angry with themselves, but Joseph knew that at present their grief might be carried to a dangerous excess. So long as he had reason to think that his brethren were not sufficiently sensible of the atrocity of their guilt, he treated them with a severity which brought their sin to remembrance in all its aggravations. But when he saw them deeply humbled and overwhelm-

6 For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

ed with confusion, he administered seasonable consolation. They were not to consider their crime too great to be forgiven, either by that God or that brother whom they had offended. Indeed his main object seems now to be to bring them to eye the hand of an overruling providence in all that had happened, so as to be reconciled to the event, though they might weep in secret places for the part which they had acted.—¶ *God did send me before you to preserve life.* We know that the righteous God hates all sin with a perfect and irreconcilable hatred; but it is his prerogative to bring good out of evil, and no sin can be committed without his knowledge, or in opposition to his holy counsels. Sinners are as really the ministers of his providence as saints, and he glorifies himself by the wickedness which he hates and punishes, as well as by that holiness which he loves and rewards. When Joseph was sold into Egypt by the envy of his brethren, God by his secret working sent him thither, that he might both attain the grandeur which they were endeavoring to counteract, and might be the happy instrument of saving many lives, not only the lives of his father's family, but of the whole nation of Egypt, and of multitudes in the neighboring countries. Let us not then in thinking of our misfortunes or our blessings lose sight of the great Author of our being and the manager of our concerns. Instead of feeling irritation of spirit against those who have been the instruments of our miseries, or lavishing all our gratitude on those to whom we have been indebted

for favors, let us raise our minds to him who has said, 'I form light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.' This was a lesson which Joseph had learned. He was instructed to acknowledge and revere God's providence in all that befel him, and would have his brethren share with him in these pious sentiments. Seeing the hand of God in his afflictions, and seeing goodness and mercy in them all, he could not only cheerfully forgive those who were his instruments in bringing him low, but endeavor also to revive their dejected spirits by turning their attention to the gracious operations of providence bringing much good to themselves and to many others, out of their own bad conduct. What we have done, we cannot undo; nor can we prevent the natural tendency of sin to produce the most miserable effects to ourselves and others; but we shall ever find abundant cause of thanksgiving that a gracious God has, in innumerable instances, counteracted that tendency, and preserved us from the pain of seeing misery diffused around us as the fruit of our doings. Yet for our humiliation let us remember that the nature of sin is not altered by the use that God makes of it. Poison does not cease to be poison, because it may enter into the composition of healing medicines. 'If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?'

6, 7. *Yet there are five years in the which, &c.* As Joseph's brethren were



8 So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God : and he hath made me a father to Pha-

Gen. ch. 41. 43. Judg. 17. 10. Job 29. 16.

little capable of speaking at present, he himself continued the discourse. To divert their minds from sorrow, and still more strongly to reassure their confidence, he goes on to speak of the still farther provision that it was necessary to make against the rigor of the famine, of which only two out of seven years had now elapsed. These two years were but the beginning of sorrows. They were to be followed by other five, every one of which would be more grievous than the former, in which there was to be neither earing, i. e. plowing, nor sowing through the greater part of the fertile country of Egypt. The reason of this would be, that there was to be no crop during that time, and of course men would not break up the ground, nor cast that seed into the earth which would produce no increase. Hope is necessary as a stimulus in every human pursuit ; and it is the will of God that 'he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope ;' i. e. should realise the object of his hope. He repeats what he had already said respecting the divine purpose in sending him before them, that it might make a deeper impression on their hearts. Whatever might be the pressure of the famine, God designed not only to preserve the lives of those who then existed, but to preserve also a posterity in the earth for Abraham and Jacob. If Isaac had perished on Mount Moriah, what would have become of the promise to Abraham ? If Jacob's sons had died of hunger, what would have become of the promise to Jacob, that in his seed

raah, and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my

all the nations of the earth should be blessed ? Let us learn from this to be thankful to God for those mercies to our fathers, by which they were preserved from destruction. They were upheld for our sakes as well as their own. None are suffered to die till they have brought into existence those who were to proceed from their loins. Let us remember too that while the daily preservation of our lives is a great mercy, yet some deliverances are so singularly great on account of the greatness of the danger from which they preserve us, or the singular circumstances attending them, that they ought to be especially remarked and celebrated.

8. *It was not you that sent me hither, but God.* That is, it was not you solely ; it was not so much you as God. Similar absolute for comparative expressions frequently occur. Thus, Ex. 16. 8, 'Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord ;' i. e. rather against the Lord than against us. Prov. 8. 10, 'Receive my instruction, and not silver ;' i. e. rather than silver. John 6. 38, 'I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me ;' i. e. not my will only. John 5. 45, 'Do not think that I will accuse you to the father ;' i. e. that I only will accuse. Words have not always the same meaning when uttered by different speakers. Had such words as these been spoken by Joseph's brethren, we should justly have thought they were uttering a lie, and almost a blasphemous lie, by endeavoring to transfer their criminal conduct to God. Adam said nothing but what was strictly true when he said, 'The woman

father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and

f ch. 47. 1.

whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat;' yet in these words we discover the corrupt disposition of the speaker. He wished to transfer his own guilt to his wife, and almost charged divine providence with it. It was saying in effect, that if God had not bestowed upon him a wayward wife he might still have been innocent and happy. Thus if Joseph's brethren had said, 'It was not we that sent you hither, but God,' we might justly have pronounced them guilty of daring impiety. But when Joseph is the speaker, we recognise the drift of the words at once, and see that they are free from any exceptionable meaning. His object is to intimate that his coming to Egypt was more God's work than theirs; that they were but instruments overruled by him for the accomplishment of his own purposes; that consequently he entertained no harsh sentiments of their conduct, but considered it, and all the effects of it, as a step of divine providence for his good. Their intention was no doubt evil, but his thoughts were so much occupied with God's intentions, that he forgot theirs. It is indeed wonderful that the Lord of hosts permits so much evil in the world, but no less wonderful that he controls, directs, limits, and overrules it, so as to make it redound to his glory.—¶ *He hath made me a father to Pharaoh.* However much Joseph was indebted to the king of Egypt, he was infinitely more indebted to the God of heaven. It was God

thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thine herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee, (for yet *there are* five years of famine;) lest thou, and thine household, and all that thou hast come to poverty.

that brought him to the knowledge of Pharaoh, and gave him favor in his sight. It was God that exalted him, and endowed him with knowledge, and wisdom, and authority, to be an eminent benefactor to Pharaoh and his kingdom. He looked beyond his brethren to God when he thought upon his afflictions, and beyond Pharaoh to God when he thought of his exaltation. Thus he bears his affliction with meekness and his elevation with humility.

9. *Haste ye, and go up, &c.* It is not surprising that Joseph was now impatient to communicate to his father the happy tidings of his life and his glory in Egypt. From prudential reasons he had hitherto done violence to his feelings in withholding information that would have cheered the heart of his father to its core. Now every thing was removed out of the way which might render it unadvisable to make Jacob acquainted with his condition; and providence had so ordered matters that he could entertain a reasonable hope of prevailing upon him to come down to Egypt. We too often mar our pleasures by too much precipitancy in enjoying them. By patience and prudence we make sure of enjoying them with a far better relish.

10, 11. *Thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, &c.* Joseph speaks as if he had all power in the land of Egypt, and would take it upon him to assign one of the best and most convenient districts in that land to his father. But this intimation would probably

12 And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that *it is* <sup>s</sup> my mouth that speaketh unto you.

g ch. 42. 23.

be less gratifying to the good old man than the prospect of being near to his beloved son. From the words of Judah, Joseph had learned what bitter griefs his father had endured by his own separation from him. He rejoiced greatly that God had now put it into his power to compensate his father for all those floods of tears which he had shed on his behalf. What happiness might father and son now expect to enjoy together, should Providence spare their lives! Jacob could not certainly wish for a greater felicity than to be with Joseph, till the time should come when angels should carry him to Abraham's bosom, which was far better.

12. *And behold, your eyes see, &c.* What the brethren of Joseph now heard and saw was so passing strange, that it was no doubt difficult for them to believe their own eyes and ears. They would be apt to question whether all was true, whether they were not in a dream, or imposed upon in some mysterious way. To obviate these misgivings, Joseph calls upon them to notice him more particularly, and see whether they could not recollect the features of his face and the sound of his voice; especially as he was now speaking to them without an interpreter. Even Benjamin, who was but a child when Joseph left Canaan, could not but know that it was Joseph who was speaking to them. It is probable, however, that they were quite as much under the influence of shame as of uncertainty. They could not doubt on the whole that it was really the mouth of Joseph that spake with them, nor

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen: and ye shall haste, and <sup>h</sup> bring down my father hither.

h Acts 7. 14.

could they well doubt his kindness. But they still found it difficult to believe that he retained no resentment at all on account of their cruel usage towards him. They were conscious that they deserved severe rebuke and punishment; and they also probably felt that they could not from their hearts have forgiven one who had treated them as they had treated Joseph. It has been frequently observed that it is much easier to forgive the injuries done to us, than to believe that the injuries which we have done to others are forgiven.

13. *Ye shall tell my father of all my glory, &c.* But what shall we think of Joseph's motive in thus speaking of his own grandeur? Are we to suppose that he was vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind? Far from it. His uniformly meek and humble deportment at once contradicts the idea. But he was extremely anxious to turn away the thoughts of his brethren from that wretched state to which they had designedly reduced him, to the happy state to which they had undesignedly advanced him. He wished to have them persuade themselves that the sense of their past wrongs was buried in the joy of his exaltation. Again, he desired his father might be informed of his glory in Egypt, because he knew it would afford him unspeakable pleasure and open his mouth in praise to that God who had been so gracious to him in the person of his son. An affectionate son takes great pleasure in giving pleasure to his father. A lover of God takes pleasure in telling what God has done for him, that his friends may

14 And he fell upon his brother: Benjamin's neck, and wept;

and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

magnify the Lord with him. Joseph had perhaps still another end in view in desiring his brethren to tell his father of his glory. This part of the message might give them the hope of finding forgiveness with their father. When he learned what they had done against their brother, he must have been shocked at their unnatural barbarity; but by hearing of Joseph's glory, he could perceive that God had sent him into Egypt by their hands to accomplish his prophetic dreams. The grace of God, in giving such a favorable issue to Joseph's afflictions, would reconcile Jacob to the men who had brought those afflictions upon him.—¶ *Ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.* Though Joseph now saw that his brethren could not forgive themselves for what they had done against him, yet he lets them know that they have it in their power, in some degree to compensate his former miseries, by using their influence along with his to hasten down their father to Egypt. One of his griefs had been that in Egypt he could not see his father's face; but for the pleasure of again beholding him, he would account himself indebted to his brethren, if they could prevail upon him to make no tarrying save what he would find to be absolutely necessary. His father's great age also, and the consequent uncertainty of life, made him still more anxious that the removal should take place with the least possible delay.

14. *He fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept.* Joseph's bowels had yearned over his brother Benjamin at the time when he stood arraigned before him as a thief, and so confounded with the charge that he

could not utter a word in his own defence. But now, when there was no farther occasion for concealing what was in his heart, his affection broke forth in all its force. Words were insufficient to express half the tenderness of his soul. He sprung into Benjamin's embraces, and held him fast, and was relieved from an oppression of joy by a fresh flood of tears. Benjamin was no doubt little less transported than Joseph. The transition from emotions of the most gloomy character to the sweetest joys that mortality can taste, was almost too much for him to bear. But tears came likewise to his relief. He wept upon Joseph's neck. Though many years had since elapsed, yet he could remember how pleasant his brother Joseph had been to him before the time that he was supposed to have been torn in pieces by the beasts of prey. He was not then too young to feel the loss of such a brother. He had moreover, doubtless, when standing by his father's knee, often heard him speak of the amiable qualities and the unhappy fate of Joseph. He no more expected to see him in the land of the living, than he did to see his fathers Abraham and Isaac raised up again from their graves in the cave of Machpelah. What overwhelming joy poured into his heart, when that crafty tyrant who would fain have made him a thief and a slave, was found to have no existence, and his own much-lamented brother appeared in his place!—as if the lions which had devoured him had rendered up their prey, and bone had come again to its bone! Cases have been known where life has been unable to sustain the impetuous tide of joy which filled the bosom, when

15 Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

16 ¶ And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Jo-

seph, Say unto thy brethren. This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

18 And take your father, and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

i ch. 27. 28. Numb. 18. 12, 29.

those friends who had been supposed dead were found to be alive. We should not have wondered had Benjamin died with joy or fainted in Joseph's presence. But the tears which he wept unloaded his heart of its excess of transports.

15. *Moreover, he kissed all his brethren.* Benjamin did not monopolise the love of Joseph. His brethren were all dear to him, and he greatly desired a place in their hearts. Though from delicacy he had said nothing of forgiving them, yet he would now express as much or more by his actions, and his affectionate kisses accompanied by tears were sure tokens that all their offences were to him as if they had never been committed. This appears more than any thing else to have removed their terror, so that now they are sufficiently composed to talk with him. How different their converse now from that which they had recently held at the governor's table; where he avoided every thing which might have betrayed an intimate acquaintance with their family, and where they were especially guarded in their answers to his questions, that they might not discover any of those family secrets which were so little to their credit!

16. *And it pleased Pharaoh well and his servants.* Heb. בְּרִיטָהּ פָּרַעַח *va-yitab be-ene Paroh, and it was good in the eyes of Pharaoh.* As Joseph was in Pharaoh's eyes such a

wonderful man, he may have supposed that his family were also remarkable for wisdom above the mass of mankind, and that if settled in his country, they might be in some way a signal blessing to it. Conscious that it had already received from Joseph greater benefits than he was able to repay, he is resolved that the whole family shall partake of his gratitude and bounty. In this it appears he had the consent and approbation of his 'servants,' or officers. This is perhaps more to be wondered at than that the king himself should be inclined to favor him. The servants of princes are seldom disposed to look kindly upon those that are raised above themselves, especially if foreigners. Joseph's merits indeed were such that they could not but be universally acknowledged. Yet the spirit which is in man lusteth so strongly to envy, that Joseph's continued good standing in the court of Pharaoh must be considered as a singular testimony to the wisdom and blamelessness of his deportment to all around him.

17, 18. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, &c.* In other affairs Pharaoh appears to have left nearly every thing to Joseph. But in the present case, in order to spare his feelings in having to invite his own relations, as it were, to another man's house, as well as to express his gratitude to so great a benefactor, the king comes forward and

19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take your wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives,

and bring your father, and come.

20 Also regard not your stuff: for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

issues the requisite orders himself. His orders are extremely liberal, as he will not only afford sufficient means of sustenance to old and young amongst them, but they shall eat of the fat of the land. We cannot but applaud this royal munificence, though we feel that it was little to what Joseph had done for Pharaoh's kingdom. Yet it is pleasant to see a conduct so different from that of the king of Egypt in the following age, who remembered not Joseph. The present sovereign entertained such a sense of obligation to Joseph as to be glad of an opportunity for extending his goodness to all the kindred of a public benefactor.

19. *Now thou art commanded, &c.* Pharaoh not only *permits*, but *commands* Joseph to furnish every convenience for the accommodation of his father's family, that they might not find any embarrassment to retard their journey to Egypt. For this purpose they were to take wagons along with them to Canaan to bring down the patriarch's household. This was a mode of travelling to which Jacob had been but little used. As at that day, so at the present, wheel-carriages are almost wholly unknown in the country of Palestine, as may be learned from the following note from the Pictorial Bible: 'The Hebrew word seems to be fairly rendered by the word *'wagon.'* A wheel-carriage of some kind or other is certainly intended; and as from other passages we learn that they were covered, at least sometimes, the best idea we can form of them is, that they bore some resemblance to our tilted wagons. With some small ex-

ception, it may be said that wheel-carriages are not now employed in Africa or Western Asia; but that they were anciently used in Egypt, and in what is now Asiatic Turkey, is attested not only by history, but by existing sculptures and paintings. It would seem that they were not at this time used in Palestine, as when Jacob saw them he knew they must have come from Egypt. Perhaps, however, he knew this by their peculiar shape. The only wheel-carriages in Western Asia with which we are acquainted are, first, a very rude cart, usually drawn by oxen, and employed in conveying agricultural produce in Armenia and Georgia; and then a vehicle called an *Arabah*, used at Constantinople and some other towns towards the Mediterranean. It is a light covered cart without springs, and being exclusively used by women, children, and aged or sick persons, (see v. 19.) would seem both in its use, and as nearly as we can discover, in its make, to be no bad representative of the wagons in the text. No wheel-carriage is, however, now used in a journey.'

20. *Regard not your stuff.* Heb חַסֶּם עֵינֶיךָ *enekem al tahos*, *let not your eye spare.* Frugality is certainly a christian virtue, yet there are times and cases when the ordinary rules of frugality ought to be set aside. Pharaoh did not wish Jacob's sons to encumber themselves with all that stuff which might have been useful to them had they remained in Canaan. He desired them to leave behind such articles of furniture as were of little value or difficult of conveyance, giving

21 And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment: but to Benjamin he gave three hundred

*pieces* of silver, and <sup>k</sup>five changes of raiment.

23 And to his father he sent after this *manner*; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

<sup>k</sup> ch. 43. 34.

them to understand that they should be no losers when they arrived in Egypt. Joseph had already made the king rich, and was every day increasing his riches, and it would be no sensible diminution of his wealth to enrich the whole family of Joseph's father to the extent of their needs and desires. If the good of all the land of Egypt was before these men, what inducements had they to encumber themselves with the furniture of their tents, or to be vexed on account of any thing that might be left behind them, or damaged in their journey? And why should those who have all the riches of the better country before them, give themselves any disquiet about the perishing things that belong to the earthly house of this tabernacle? The heirs of heaven are rich in the midst of poverty; although they have nothing, they possess all things. Never let them give less credit to the promises of their heavenly Father, than Jacob's sons gave to the king of Egypt.

21. *And the children of Israel did so.* That is, resolved to do so; saw fit to comply with this injunction. They could not be said to have done *all* that was comprised in the order till they had actually brought their father and their families to Egypt. But such a phraseology is common to express the *purpose* of an action, or series of actions, afterwards performed. It is very probable that the commandments of Pharaoh were the suggestion of Joseph

himself, for Pharaoh commanded him to do for his brethren what he expressed his intention of doing when Pharaoh knew not that his brethren were come.

22. *He gave each man changes of raiment.* It is still a common custom in the East with rich men, to testify their love for their friends, or their esteem for strangers, by presents of garments. As the fashion of clothes never changes with them as with us, they do not become useless as long as they last, if proper care be taken of them. Joseph by giving five changes of raiment to his brother Benjamin virtually published to his brethren the superior regard which he entertained for him as the son of his mother, as well as of his father. In this he was so far from showing any disrespect to his other brethren, that he paid them a compliment which we cannot doubt was very grateful to them. He showed his confidence in their good dispositions toward Benjamin. Had he not firmly believed that there was now a complete revolution in their temper, he would not have honored him with such an open testimony of his partial fondness; and this they could not fail to perceive.

23. *To his father he sent after this manner, &c.* It was no doubt a pleasure to Jacob to partake of the fruits of the attention and kindness of his long-lost Joseph. Yet we may safely suppose he derived more pleasure from Joseph's goodness to his brethren, than from the presents sent to himself. He

24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed : and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

25 ¶ And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

had no reason to doubt of Joseph's warm filial affection, but it would fill him with joy unspeakable to find his son exhibiting the highest pattern of meekness, and of the forgiveness of injuries, that the world had ever yet beheld. The greatest pleasure of an aged saint is to see his children walking in the truth and bringing forth fruits of righteousness to the praise of the glory of God. Joseph did not send this large supply to his father to enable him to continue longer in the land of Canaan, for he hoped soon to have him with himself; but while the additional quantity and value of the gifts served as a token of his peculiar affection, as did the five-fold mess to Benjamin, it was probably no more than was requisite as a supply for their wants on the way to Egypt.

24. *See that ye fall not out by the way.*

Heb. אל תרגזו *al tirgezu*, be not stirred; i. e. do not fall into contentions; do not give way to criminations and recriminations. The original word may signify any strong commotion of mind, under the influence either of fear, or grief, or anger. Gr. 'Do not be angry.' Chal. 'Do not contend.' They were in effect forbidden to accuse each other with respect to the past. Joseph had seen the violent agitation of their minds, both when they were put in prison, and when he made himself known to them. He had already heard from Reuben some severe reflections on his brethren, and he was afraid lest they should either feel more uneasiness than he wished them to do, or exasperate one another by reflections on

26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

27 And they told him all the

1 Job. 29. 24. Ps. 126. 1. Luke 24. 11, 41.

their former conduct. As Joseph was now a happy man, he desired to make all his brethren happy, and to preserve them from any thing that would make them unhappy, and particularly from quarrels among themselves. In the course of their long journey their conversation would turn naturally on the remarkable events that had taken place, and without a strong guard both on their hearts and their lips they would be in danger of conceiving mutual resentments, hurtful to their comfort and their peace. If he had forgiven them all, it was highly reasonable that they should forgive one another. Joseph therefore was a peace-maker both by precept and example.

25, 26. *And they went up out of Egypt, &c.* Jacob was no doubt looking and longing for their return, and the sight of them as they came up filled him with ineffable delight. Simeon and Benjamin were both in the company. His soul was filled with the praises of that goodness which had preserved them in the way which they went, and restored them safe to his arms. But he was soon made to understand that materials existed for thanksgiving beyond what he had ever imagined. Yet it can scarcely be supposed that the main tidings were announced so suddenly as is here related. They would naturally endeavor to break the force of the transports of joy into which he would be thrown, by gradually imparting their intelligence. Yet whatever was the mode of announcement, it was not to be expected that Jacob could hear the tidings without



words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

28 And Israel said, *It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

being wrought up to a pitch of overwhelming joy. We are not surprised therefore to hear it said that Jacob's heart fainted on the reception of the news, and that he considered it too good to be true.—¶ *His heart fainted.* Heb. יפג לבו *yaphog libbo*, his heart was weakened. Gr. ἐξέστη ἡ διανοία, he was astonished in his mind. Chal. 'And those words were wavering in his mind.' The meaning plainly is, that the report agitated his mind to such a degree that his frame could scarcely sustain the shock. There seemed to be certain proof both that Joseph was dead, and that he was not dead. There was an inexplicable mystery in the affair, and the extremes of joy and grief seized on the old man. His soul was enfeebled in his weak body by his conflicting emotions.

27. *The spirit of Jacob revived.* If Jacob upon the first report of the tidings brought by his sons was so overpowered as almost to lose for a time the possession of his faculties, he did not remain long in that state, but was soon able to attend to the account which his sons gave him of their journey, and of the invitation sent to him to Egypt. This account they were able to confirm by pointing him to the wagons which they had brought with them. The sight of these forbade his doubting any longer. Surely his sons had not collected so many wagons to impose an incredible falsehood upon him, and one so dishonorable to themselves. The proof was complete. His apprehensions were banished. 'His spirit revived,' and joy without measure took possession of his soul.

28. *And Israel said, It is enough, &c.* What he had heard and seen was enough not only to remove his doubts, but to heal his wounded heart, to set all right, to solve all mysteries, and to satisfy his soul. 'I have full evidence that Joseph is alive. I could not be better assured of the fact, if I saw him with mine own eyes; and my joy is full. All the happiness that the world can give is mine. I have no more wishes on this side of the grave.' The words remind us of what was said by the father of the prodigal son, when he returned to the paternal roof. 'This my son was lost, and is found; he was dead, and is now alive.' It will be observed that nothing is said of his reception of the gifts, nor is it intimated that he was particularly affected by the report of his son's glory in Egypt; it was enough for him that he was *alive*. This was at present his grand absorbing consolation; and though the sight of Benjamin an hour before this time would have appeared to him a sufficient happiness for this world, yet now he enjoys not only that, but cherishes the hope of seeing and embracing once more the son whose loss he had mourned year after year in bitterness of soul. 'I will go and see him before I die.' His beloved Rachel would be again alive to him, when blessed with the sight of his lost and best-beloved son. Trials might have to be undergone, and dangers to be encountered, by a body exhausted by age and grief, before he can set his eyes on Joseph; but what will not Jacob do, or suffer, or risk to obtain another sight of that son whom his soul loved? That love which is as

## CHAPTER XLVI.

AND Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to <sup>a</sup> Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices <sup>b</sup> unto the God of his father Isaac.

a ch. 21. 31, 33. & 28. 10. b ch. 26, 24, 25. & 28. 13. & 31. 42.

strong as death would reconcile him to death when once again he had feasted his eyes upon its precious object.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

1. *And Israel took his journey with all that he had, &c.* That is, with all his household; for it seems reasonable to suppose that he complied with Pharaoh's intimation, and left his various heavy furniture and utensils behind him. The step which he was now about to take was obviously one of the utmost importance both to himself and his posterity; and we cannot suppose that so good a man would enter upon such an undertaking without solemnly invoking the divine blessing. But though he had doubtless *privately* committed his way to God from the first, yet he seems to have had some special reasons for deferring his *public* devotions till he should arrive at Beersheba. This was a memorable spot. It was rendered so by the sojournings there of Abraham and Isaac, and himself also, and by the many testimonies there received of the favor and protection of their covenant God. This therefore he selects as the place for the offering up of his solemn sacrifices, a place lying on the borders of that land of promise which he was now leaving for ever, and where so many familiar objects and sacred recollections would aid the devout sentiments of his heart. In his approaches to God he did not forget to avail himself of the covenant made with his fathers and of the promises already on record. In like manner it

2 And God spake unto Israel <sup>c</sup> in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob! and he said, Here *am* I.

3 And he said, *I am* God, <sup>d</sup> the God of thy father: fear not to go

c ch. 15, 1. Job. 33. 14, 15. d ch. 28. 13.

is both wise and pleasant for us to avail ourselves of the remembrance of our pious ancestors when we plead with God for special mercies. It is sweet to a devout mind to be able to say, 'He is my God, and I will exalt him; my father's God, and I will build him an habitation.' Jacob no doubt greatly longed to see Joseph, but his most ardent passions were under the control of religious principle, and he would rather have died without seeing Joseph in this world, than go to see him without the comfortable assurance of having the divine blessing in so doing. Nor did he value the delay in his journey necessary to secure this blessing. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

2. *And God spake unto Israel, &c.* The historian in this and in the foregoing verse calls Jacob by the name of Israel, an appellation which appears gradually to have come into use, and which from its associations was well calculated to afford him encouragement in every season of distress. The Most High, however, visiting him in the visions of the night, here called him by his first and ordinary name 'Jacob,' perhaps to put him in mind of what he was in himself. He was now indeed honored with a very glorious title, but he must not forget that he was only Jacob when God met with him in his early days. He might have been exalted above measure with the revelations made to him, if he had forgotten what he once was. The address which God here makes to his ser-

down into Egypt; for I will there  
\* make of thee a great nation :

4 <sup>r</sup> I will go down with thee  
into Egypt; and I will also

e ch. 12. 2 Deut. 26. 5, f ch. 28 15. & 48. 21.

surely <sup>s</sup> bring thee up *again*.  
and <sup>h</sup> Joseph shall put his hand  
upon thine eyes.

g ch. 15. 16. & 50. 13, 24, 25. Exod. 3. 8.  
h ch. 50. 1.

vant undoubtedly had reference to Jacob's design in offering the sacrifices. Accordingly we learn from the tenor of the answer that his object was to obtain some clear testimony of the divine approbation of the step he was about to take. This is abundantly afforded him in what follows.

3, 4. *I am God, the God of thy father.* As such the patriarch sought Jehovah, v. 1, and as such he found him. He well knew that Isaac had ever found God faithful to all his gracious engagements, and nothing would yield him stronger consolation than to be assured that the same loving-kindness and truth would be extended to him also. This language, accordingly, was a virtual renewal of the covenant of Abraham, and would leave nothing to be desired on the score of assurance.

—¶ *Fear not to go down into Egypt.* The seasons when God administers his comforts to his people, are generally those in which they stand in the greatest need of them. At this time Jacob greatly needed support to his heart in view of his journey to Egypt. He perhaps saw little difficulty in his way when he first thought of it. His joy at hearing of Joseph's life and glory was so rapturous that all obstacles were overlooked. But when he deliberated coolly on the subject, it presented itself in new lights. In the first place, his father Isaac in a time of famine had been warned *not* to go down to Egypt. Was it then lawful for him? Secondly, he was doubtless acquainted with the prediction that his seed were to be afflicted in Egypt. Might not his going thither tend to

hasten that dreaded crisis? Thirdly he may have been apprehensive that by thus removing to a foreign country his posterity would not only be deprived of the land of promise, but be in imminent danger of being corrupted by the prevailing idolatry of Egypt. On all these accounts it was very desirable that he should have a clear warrant from heaven as to the measure contemplated, and God is pleased to remove all his latent misgivings, and intimates that Egypt was to be the cradle of that great nation which was to descend from his loins. How strikingly this promise was verified we may learn from the fact that the seventy souls which went down into Egypt increased in the space of two hundred and fifteen years, to about eighteen hundred thousand. But the Lord not only thus removes his doubts as to the path of duty, but assures him moreover that he would go with him thither as he had been with him hitherto. If so, no enemies would be able to destroy him, no accident to harm him.

—¶ *I will surely bring thee up again.* The Lord does not say that he would bring him up again as soon as the remaining years of the famine were ended, nor even that he would bring him up alive. Indeed, the contrary might be inferred from the very words of the promise; for he was to remain there till he had become a great nation, and it cannot be supposed that he expected or wished to live till that promise was accomplished. The words were fulfilled to the letter when Jacob's dead body was brought up from Egypt. But this was a small thing. It was

5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba : and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons <sup>k</sup> which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods which they had

i Acts 7. 15. k ch. 45. 19, 21.

gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, <sup>l</sup> Jacob, and all his seed with him ;

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

l Deut. 26. 5. Josh. 24. 4. Ps. 105. 23. Isa. 52. 4.

only a pledge of the fulfilment of the promise in its larger and truer sense; for it was to be in the *person of his seed* that Jacob was to be brought up to possess the earthly inheritance. In his own person he was received into the inheritance of the saints in light. —¶ *Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.* That is, shall stand by the bed-side in the hour of thy dissolution, and perform the last office of filial piety in closing thine eyes. Such a promise was not only an assurance, that God in love to him would order the circumstances of his latter end to his own satisfaction, but that he and Joseph should not be again separated. Long had this dear son been lost to him, though still alive, but now he learns that Joseph is to survive him, and that he should enjoy his society till death. No parent now knows whether any of his dearest friends will live to close his eyes. Parents have been often known to lament that they had lived so long in a valley of tears to bemoan the loss of those whose youth and vigor promised a long continuance of life. Jacob was almost the only father who could certainly say that he would not live to mourn over the best beloved of his children. David knew that Solomon would outlive him, but he saw the miserable end of another son not less dear to his heart.

5. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba, &c. Jacob, though doubtless refreshed and strengthened by the late

manifestation, was unable to travel on foot to a distant country, as he had done in the days of his youth. In this emergency a kind providence furnishes him with suitable vehicles to carry him to Egypt, and his children were careful to perform for him every office that could make his journey pleasant. This was a debt of kindness which was justly owed to Jacob from his sons. They were little children at the time of his last long journey, and he prayed and wrestled with God for them when they were in danger, and used all possible means to appease their enraged uncle, and moved slowly along the road as the women and children were able to bear. Now Jacob was himself a child in strength, and his vigorous children recompensed their father's tender care by their care of him on the journey.

6. *They took their cattle and their goods, &c.* The mention of their bringing their 'goods' with them may strike the reader as inconsistent with what we have said in v. 1, respecting their compliance with Pharaoh's injunction as to their 'stuff.' But the truth is, the original words for *goods* and *stuff* are different and doubtless have a different import; so that they might have left their *stuff*, their coarser and more cumbrous utensils behind them, while their *goods*, their more choice, precious, and costly effects, they may have taken with them.

7. *His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, &c.* Jacob had

¶ 8 And <sup>m</sup> these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: <sup>n</sup> Reuben, Jacob's first-born.

9 And the sons of Reuben; Hanoeh, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi.

10 ¶ And <sup>o</sup> the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.

<sup>m</sup> Ex. 1. 1. & 6. 14. <sup>n</sup> Numb. 26. 5. 1 Chron. 5. 1. <sup>o</sup> Ex. 6. 15. 1 Chron. 4. 24.

but one daughter, Dinah, but the term may here include his daughters-in-law, or it may be used indefinitely, as 'sons,' v. 23, signifies *one son*. In like manner it is said that the *malefactors* who were crucified with Christ, reviled him, when it appears from another Evangelist that but *one* of them is intended. It was said in the previous verse that Jacob's sons carried him in the wagons which they had brought from Egypt. Here we are told that Jacob brought all his sons, and his sons' sons with him into Egypt. The two passages together form one of those *insinuating* modes of expression not unusual in the Scripture, the drift of which is to inform us that while his sons took all the trouble of the journey upon themselves, their father kept all the authority in his hands and was looked upon, out of respect to his age, as the proper controlling head of the expedition. This precedency none of his sons grudged to their venerable father. They were happy to be under his direction, and considered him as the bond of their union. See Note on Gen. 11. 31.

8—14. *These are the names of the children of Israel, &c.* We have here a list of Jacob's descendants who went

11 ¶ And the sons of <sup>p</sup> Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

12 ¶ And the sons of <sup>q</sup> Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but <sup>r</sup> Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And <sup>s</sup> the sons of Pharez were Hezron, and Hamul.

13 ¶ And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron.

14 ¶ And the sons of Zebulon; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Chron. 6. 1, 16. <sup>q</sup> 1 Chron. 2. 3. & 4. 21. <sup>r</sup> ch. 38. 3, 7, 10. <sup>s</sup> ch. 38. 29. 1 Chron. 2. 5. <sup>t</sup> 1 Chron. 7. 1.

with him into Egypt, the leading design of which is, by the contrast between their present small number and their subsequent amazing increase, to illustrate, in the most striking manner, the truth of the divine prediction and promise made to Abraham, Gen. 15. 5. The different rate of increase of the chosen seed at different periods of the 430 years is very remarkable, and such as must greatly have tried the faith of the patriarchs. For twenty-five years after the promise, Abraham had no child. When Isaac was at length born, he lived to the age of forty before he was married. Here were sixty-five years elapsed and but a single one of that seed which was to be as the stars of heaven for multitude. Isaac finally married, and twenty years pass by before he has a child, by which time Abraham has reached the age of a hundred and sixty. Jacob is born, and about eighty years of his life elapse before he becomes a father. So that for one hundred and sixty five, years after the date of the promise, only two individuals, Isaac and Jacob, appeared as its fruits. But now the promised seed began to increase rapidly in number. Early in life each of Jacob's sons had

15 These *be* the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters *were* thirty and three.

16 ¶ And the sons of Gad; <sup>a</sup> Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.

17 ¶ <sup>a</sup> And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel.

18 <sup>y</sup> These *are* the sons of

u Numb. 26. 15, &c. x 1 Chron. 7. 30.  
y ch. 30. 10.

sons born to them, and some of them, were grandfathers when they had arrived at middle age. God will hasten his word in his own time, and not sooner.—¶ *Which came into Egypt.* The original here affords us a specimen of that *graphic* power for which the Hebrew is so remarkable, and which is so often lost to the mere readers of versions. Although the historian is describing an event long since past, and might therefore have been expected to employ a verb in the past tense, yet instead of אשר באו *asher ba-u* *which came*, he makes use of the present participle הוֹבְאִים *habba-im*, *which were going*, a phraseology that depicts the scene as actually transpiring before us. We see them, as it were, in the very act of emigration. See my Note on Gen. 41. 2. Ps. 3. 6.—¶ v. 10, *Shaul the son*, &c. One of Simeon's sons, in distinction from the rest, is said to have been by a Canaanitish woman. This circumstance would not have been mentioned, if it had not been an uncommon thing in the holy family to marry the daughters of Canaan. The fact, therefore, is a kind of dis-

30

Zilpah, <sup>a</sup> whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter: and these she bare unto Jacob, *even* sixteen souls.

19 The sons of Rachel, <sup>a</sup> Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin.

20 ¶ <sup>b</sup> And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

21 ¶ <sup>c</sup> And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, <sup>d</sup> Ehi, and Rosh, <sup>e</sup> Muppim, and Hup-pim, and Ard.

z ch. 29. 24. a ch. 44. 27. b ch. 41. 50.  
c 1 Chron. 7. 6. & 8. 1. d Numb. 26. 38.  
e Numb. 26. 39.

graceful brand fixed upon the memory of Simeon, for having violated the usage and the precept which in this respect governed the chosen race. Again, in the list of Judah's family we have an account of two young persons who left their carcases in Canaan; Er and Onan, it is said, died in the land of Canaan. Why then do we hear of them in this place which is occupied in an account of those who went down with Jacob, and not of what happened in Canaan? We must not suppose there are any useless repetitions in the Bible. The story of Er and Onan is recalled to mind, that we may not forget how dangerous it is to provoke the Lord. They were very young persons when they perished in their iniquity. Let not the young take liberty to sin in the presumptuous hope that they will repent and find mercy when they are old. What if God should suddenly cut them off from life before the time come that they have set for repentance, and make them a warning to others that their time is rot in their own hands?

15. *These be the sons of Leah, &c.*

22 These *are* the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob; all the souls *were* een.

23 ¶ <sup>f</sup>And the sons of Dan; Hushim.

24 ¶ <sup>g</sup>And the sons of Naphtali; Jahze l, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem.

25 <sup>h</sup>These *are* the sons of Bilhah, <sup>i</sup> which Laban ga <sup>e</sup> unto Rachel his d <sup>u</sup>ghter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls *were* seven.

26 <sup>k</sup>All the souls that came

<sup>f</sup> 1 Chron. 7. 12. <sup>g</sup> 1 Chron. 7. 13. <sup>h</sup> ch. 30. 5, 7. <sup>i</sup> ch. 29. 29. <sup>k</sup> Ex. 1. 5.

with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls *were* threescore and six;

27 And the sons of Joseph which were borne him in Egypt, *were* two souls: <sup>l</sup>all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, *were* threescore and ten.

28 ¶ And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, <sup>m</sup> to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came <sup>n</sup> into the land of Goshen.

<sup>l</sup> Deut. 10. 22. Acts 7. 14. <sup>m</sup> ch. 31. 21. <sup>n</sup> ch. 47. 1.

Leah was the literal mother of the six heads of families in Israel mentioned above; but is only by a Heb. usage that she is called the mother of those who descended from them. In like manner we must allow something for idiom when we are told that they were born in Padan-aram. It is only in the sense of her having borne them in the persons of their fathers that the words hold true, for they were all born in Canaan. It is an instance of the same usage by which Levi is said to have paid tithes in the loins of his father Abraham. See also Note on Gen. 24. 5.—¶ *With his daughter Dinah.* It is worthy of note, that Dinah is mentioned *alone* in this connexion. All Leah's sons were heads of families and fathers of tribes in Israel. But poor Dinah was only an *aunt*, not a *mother*, in Israel. She had taken a false step in her youth, which clouded all her future days. From yielding too much to the impulses of a girlish curiosity, she had become the victim of the seducer. From that time she appears to have lived desolate in her father's house. To what misery do the rash and thoughtless often subject themselves through the whole ~~course~~ of their lives by one imprudent

piece of conduct!—¶ *All the souls of his sons and daughters were thirty and three.* Or rather according to the Heb., 'All the souls, (including) sons and daughters, were thirty and three.' The number is made out by including Jacob himself and excluding Er and Onan, who were now dead, as was also Leah herself.

26, 27. *All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, &c.* There is an apparent discrepancy between this account of Moses and that of Stephen, Acts 17. 4, in regard to the numbers here mentioned. But Stephen in making his statement, followed the Sept. which has seventy-five. This arose from their adding five sons of Ephraim and Manasseh, born in Egypt, on the authority of 1 Chron. 7. 14—20. So that in fact both accounts are true. Moses says that all the souls *he had reckoned* were seventy; but he does not say there were no more; the Sept. adds the names of five more, and then says that *all the names reckoned* were seventy-five, which is true if the book of Chronicles be true. Though there is a variation therefore, there is no contradiction. But the Sept., it may be remarked, is several times quoted by

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen; and presented himself unto him: and he ° fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

o ch. 45, 14.

the New Testament writers, even when it varies from the Hebrew text. The number seventy in v. 27, is made out by including those who are excluded in v. 26.

28. *And he sent Judah before him, &c.* Drawing nigh to Egypt, or to the royal city, Judah is sent before to apprise Joseph of his father's arrival. Jacob could not travel with such speed as he desired to see the son so dear to his heart, but doubted not that when he heard of his approach he would come forth to meet him. Thus they would both gain some hours of happiness. Besides, it was obviously proper that the house of Pharaoh also should have warning of the approach of such a large company before they made their appearance.—¶ *To direct his face.* Heb. להורות לפניך *leho-roth lephanav, to teach or inform before him.* This may be understood both of Judah's informing Joseph of his father's arrival, and also of Joseph's 'teaching,' or 'giving information,' relative to the location of Jacob and his family in the land of Goshen. Chal. 'That he might make preparation before him.'

29. *And Joseph made ready his chariot.* Heb. מרכבתו יסור *merkavto, bound his chariot*; i. e. bound or harnessed the horses to the chariot. The term 'chariot' is taken in a large sense embracing both the vehicles and the horses by which they were drawn. Joseph sent wagons only for his father and his father's house, but made ready

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, ¶ Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's

p Luke 2. 29, 30.

a chariot for himself. This proceeded not from a spirit of vain ostentation, but it was proper that Joseph should appear with an equipage suited to the station to which the king had advanced him. Particular situations in life often impose that upon humble minds which they would not covet of their own accord.—¶ *Presented himself to him*; Heb. ירא אליו *yera elav, was seen or appeared to him.* The expression implies that this was done as an act of special honor and reverence to his father, as the term is that which is used in the law for men's *appearing* or *presenting themselves* before the Lord. Thus Ex. 23. 17, 'Three times in the year all thy males shall appear (Heb. יראה *yeraeh, shall be seen*) before the Lord God.'—¶ *Fell on his neck and wept, &c.* The indefinite form of the expression leaves us at liberty to refer the 'he' either to Jacob or to Joseph, or to both, as no doubt the falling on the neck was mutual. It would be a vain and useless attempt to describe the pleasure that both father and son received and gave while thus locked in a tender embrace. Their emotions were too strong for utterance, and they could only express them by their mingled tears. How richly was Joseph now compensated for all the bitter tears which the envy of his brethren, and the rage of his mistress had extorted from his eyes. Pleasant were the moments when he wept on the neck of Benjamin; but his pleasure seems to have been still greater when



house, <sup>9</sup> I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which *were* in the land of Canaan, are come unto me :

q ch. 47. 1.

he wept on his father's neck, as it is here said that he wept on it 'a good while.'

30. *And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, &c.* The good old man is now so filled to overflowing with happiness, that the thoughts of death came to him as a kind of relief. Having enjoyed as much as he could desire in this world, it is not surprising that he should now wish to go to another. Although life was more pleasant to Jacob than it had been for many past years, yet pleasant as it had become, he would have parted with it without sorrow, because the pleasure he experienced would not admit of the approaches of sorrow. As a man that has found a precious treasure which he did not expect, would not feel much pain in losing a small sum of money, because his gain exceeds his loss; so Jacob, had he died at this time, would have thought the loss of his own life a small matter, when he had gained a more precious life than his own. His joy was no doubt the greater in proportion to his previous mourning. Having in his own mind so long numbered Joseph with the dead, the sight of him living was little short of receiving him from among the tenants of the tomb. Who can wonder therefore that he should have virtually exclaimed, like good old Simeon, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' How little did he think that he had seventeen years of life yet before him in this world!

31. *And Joseph said unto his brethren,*

32 And the men *are* shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

*ren, &c.* Though Joseph no doubt continued for some time in sweet converse with his father, yet he did not overlook his brethren. They were all welcome, and he behaved in such a manner as to make them feel that they were welcome to Egypt, to partake in his prosperity. They were shepherds compelled to leave their own country. Joseph was the lord of Egypt, yet he was not ashamed to acknowledge his relation to them, either before the people or before the king. His heart was not exalted above his brethren by the superiority of his station, nor alienated from them by their malicious conduct toward himself. It was a proper token of respect to the king, as well as to his brethren, to inform Pharaoh that they were come to his country, from the land of Canaan, at his desire. Pharaoh told Joseph that in the throne himself only was to be greater, and Joseph did not forget the respect to so kind a sovereign and benefactor.

32. *The men are shepherds, &c.* Joseph well knew how greatly shepherds were detested by the Egyptians, and yet he would not conceal from the king that he was sprung from a race of shepherds. His credit was too well established to be affected by the knowledge of this connexion, and it was necessary that his brethren's occupation should be known to the king that he might assign them a convenient dwelling for their flocks and herds. And here it is observable with what 'meekness of wisdom' Joseph demeaned himself in this affair. Most men in similar circumstances would have been

33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, 'What *is* your occupation?

34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cat-

tle 'from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* 'an abomination unto the Egyptians.

r ch. 47. 2, 3. s ver. 32.

t ch. 30. 35. & 34. 5. & 37. 12. u ch. 43. 32. Exod. 8. 26.

for introducing their relations as speedily as possible into posts of honor and profit, lest they should disgrace him. But Joseph's ambition runs not in that channel. He seeks not high things for his relations, but is more concerned for their purity than for their outward dignity. He was aware that they would be in danger from contact with an idolatrous nation, and therefore sought to secure them a place as free as possible from the evil influences to which they would be exposed in a court. This was probably one ground of the frankness which he proposed to assume in addressing the king.

33. *And it shall come to pass, &c.* It was to be expected that Pharaoh would call for Joseph's brethren, and converse with them. His long friendship for Joseph would make him desirous of seeing his brethren, and perhaps of honoring them with employment in his service. It was fitting therefore that they should be prepared by previous instructions for such an interview. First impressions concerning them on the king's mind might be very useful or hurtful to their interests. Joseph knew that an inquiry as to their occupation would naturally be made. The king would not ask them whether they had *any* occupation, for that they had some, and had not been through life eating the bread of idleness, he would take for granted. But he would wish to know *what* their occupation was. Accordingly Joseph says in effect, 'I will go before you and tell the

king that you are shepherds, and have been so all your lives, and your fathers before you. This will prevent his making any proposals for raising you to posts of honor in the state; and he will at once feel the propriety of assigning you a part of the country which is suited to the sustenance of your flocks and herds, and where you may live by yourselves uncontaminated by Egyptian customs. And when you come before the king, and he shall ask you of your occupation, then do you confirm what I have said of you. And as the employment of a shepherd is meanly accounted of in Egypt, and those that follow it are despised and reckoned unfit for public offices, this will determine the king to say nothing on that subject, but to grant you a place in Goshen.' Thus, while men in general are pressing after the highest stations in life, and sacrificing every thing to obtain them, we see a man who had for nine years occupied a place of eminence, and felt both its advantages and its disadvantages, carefully directing his dearest friends and relations in another course of life, as far more productive of peace and happiness. Every wise man will consider that situation as best for his children and friends, which will be esteemed best on a death-bed, or in another world.

34. *Every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.* It is not clear whether we are to regard these as the words of Joseph, urging the fact stated as an argument with his brethren

to induce them to follow his advice, or as the words of Moses giving a reason for Joseph's counsel. The fact itself is a very remarkable one, and one for which various causes have been assigned by historians and commentators. As we have no authentic history of the Egyptians at this early period, except what we find in the Bible, it is no wonder that the solutions proposed still leave the subject a theme for conjecture. By some it has been supposed that this abhorrence of shepherds was occasioned by cruel depredations committed in Egypt at a former period by an army of nomade Cushites called the 'shepherd-kings,' who came from Arabia, and overrun nearly the whole country, and who afterwards withdrew to Palestine, where they became the Philistines. Others have conceived that the cause was to be sought for in the animal worship of the Egyptians, which naturally rendered them averse to persons who fed on creatures which they considered sacred. But it is by no means certain that the Egyptians as a people practised this superstition, or that its influence upon the rearing or rearers of cattle was very marked. 'Of the larger cattle, the cow alone was considered sacred. We doubt if any strong objection on its account could have arisen against the nomade shepherds, as they never kill cows for food, and rarely even oxen; and it does not appear that they often offered cows in sacrifice, for in all the Old Testament previously to the exodus from Egypt, we read of only one heifer sacrificed, Gen. 15. 9. The Egyptians did not worship bulls or oxen; the worship of the bull Apis being restricted to an individual animal: other bulls were used in sacrifices, and are so represented in sculptures. The priests themselves ate beef and veal without scruple. There was even a caste of herdsmen among the Egyptians, and herds

of black cattle are represented in sculptures and paintings, some of which are preserved in the British Museum. The ox was used as food, and in agricultural labor, and in the same ancient remains is continually represented as drawing the plough. Even Pharaoh himself was a proprietor of cattle see ch. 47. 6, and wished to have men of ability to superintend them; and he would scarcely have offered this employment to the brothers of his chief minister, if the employment of rearing cattle had in itself been considered degrading. We conclude, however, that *so far* as the hatred of the Egyptians to shepherds arose from their religious prejudices, it was connected almost entirely with the cow—the only pastoral animal which they generally considered sacred. Any objection connected with sheep and goats could only have operated locally, since the Egyptians themselves sacrificed or ate them in different districts. We are therefore inclined, following out a hint furnished by Heeren, to consider that the aversion of the Egyptians was not so exclusively to rearers of cattle as such, as to the class of pastors who associated the rearing of cattle with habits and pursuits which rendered them equally hated and feared by a settled and refined people like the Egyptians. We would therefore understand the text in the most intense sense, and say that '*every nomade shepherd* was an abomination to the Egyptians;' for there is no evidence that this disgrace attached to those cultivators who, being proprietors of lands, made the rearing of cattle a principal part of their business. The nomade tribes, who pastured their flocks on the borders or within the limits of Egypt, did not in general belong to the Egyptian nation, but were of Arabian or Lybian descent; whence the prejudice against them as nomades was

## CHAPTER XLVII.

THEN Joseph <sup>a</sup> came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they

a ch. 46. 31.

superadded to that against foreigners in general. The turbulent and aggressive disposition which usually forms part of the character of nomades—and their entire independence, or at least the imperfect and uncertain control which it is possible to exercise over their tribes—are circumstances so replete with annoyance and danger to a carefully organized society like that of the Egyptians, as sufficiently to account for the hatred and scorn which the ruling priestly caste strove to keep up against them; and it was probably in order to discourage all intercourse that the regulation precluding Egyptians from eating with them was first established.' *Pict. Bible.*

## CHAPTER XLVII.

1. *Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, &c.* Joseph, in the height of his prosperity, did not forget that he had a superior. Dearly as he loved his father and his brethren, he did not settle them in the possessions which he intended for them without Pharaoh's consent. He probably might, by his own authority, have placed them in Goshen, but he wisely desired that the king himself should allot them their habitation. Servants ought not to be forward in exercising that power with which they are entrusted, either for their own personal benefit, or for that of their relations. Those are most likely to retain their power, and enjoy it with the least envy, who use it with modesty and moderation. Joseph throughout this transaction showed himself wholly

have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in <sup>b</sup> the land of Goshen.

2 And he took some of his brethren, *even* five men, and <sup>c</sup> presented them unto Pharaoh.

b ch. 45. 10. &amp; 46. 28. c Acts. 7. 13.

unlike multitudes who readily make promises both to God and man, but either forget to perform them, or take their own time for it. He immediately performs what he had promised to his father and brethren. Happy as he was in their company, he did not indulge himself in the pleasure of talking or of eating and drinking with them, while they continued without a settlement, but at once takes the proper steps to procure for them the desired place of abode in Egypt. To this end he mentions that they were already in that part of the country with their flocks and herds; hoping that this might induce the king to consent to their remaining there.

2. *And he took some of his brethren even five men, &c.* Heb. מִקְצֵה *mik-tzeh*, a determinate part. The original word, though signifying *an end*, *an extremity*, is derived from a root frequently used in the sense of *cutting off*, *making an abscission of a certain definite portion of any thing*. In this case, the definite number of five were *cut off*, as it were, from the whole number of Joseph's brethren, for the purpose of being presented to Pharaoh. Gr. 'Of his brethren he took five men.' He did not single out such of his brethren as made the finest appearance, or were best qualified to shine in the presence of a king, but took five of those that most readily occurred to him without selection. Such appears to be the import of the phraseology in the original. He was an honest man and wished Pharaoh to form no other

3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, <sup>d</sup> What *is* your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, <sup>e</sup> Thy servants *are* shepherds, both we, *and* also our fathers.

4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, <sup>f</sup> For to sojourn in the land are we come: for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, <sup>g</sup> for the famine *is* sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy ser-

d ch. 46. 33. e ch. 46. 34. f ch. 15. 13. Deut. 26. 5. g ch. 43. 1. Acts 7. 11.

opinion concerning his brethren than what they would be able to support. Joseph did not at this time take all his brethren with him to court, as it was no doubt necessary that a part of them should remain to take care of their father, and of their little ones, and their substance.

3, 4. *And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, &c.* The king's interrogation corresponded precisely with what Joseph had anticipated, and their answer accorded with their previous instructions. It was an answer which left them no room to hope for any higher place than to be rulers over his cattle. Their brother was in a very exalted station, but they did not envy him, or wish to share in his grandeur, but readily complied with his advice, by telling the king what had been their former occupation. They inform him, moreover, that they had not come to take up their perpetual residence in Egypt. They did not propose to become naturalized in his kingdom, but wished only to be accounted as strangers and sojourners there, whose necessities had drawn them thither for a time, with their flocks and herds, but who still had the intention of eventually returning again to the land of

vants <sup>h</sup> dwell in the land of Goshen.

5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:

6 <sup>i</sup> The land of Egypt *is* before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; <sup>k</sup> in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

h ch. 46. 34. i ch. 20. 15. k ver. 4.

their inheritance. They had left it for a season; they could not dwell in it without losing all their cattle, for which they could with difficulty find subsistence for the two former years. In five years more a great part of the cattle of Canaan was likely to perish; yet they would not on any account renounce their *final* interest in that good land of promise. This land might not always secure its inhabitants against famine. It might be more grievously afflicted than other lands, but it was the land which the God of their fathers had spied out for them and given them for an everlasting inheritance; and there were their hearts.—¶ *Thy servants are shepherds.* Heb. רֹעֵה צֹאן *roeh tzon*, a feeder of sheep; either the collect. sing. for the plural, or to be understood distributively, 'every one of thy servants is a feeder of sheep.'

5, 6. *And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, &c.* The men had now presented to Pharaoh their humble petition. They were but shepherds, and the offspring of shepherds, a set of men whom Pharaoh was taught by his education to abhor. But they were Joseph's brethren, who was not ashamed to acknowledge his relation

7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before

Pharaoh : and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

to them. He could not despise men so nearly related to the saviour of his country. A truly royal liberality therefore breathes through his reply to their request, which he makes in his address to Joseph. All that they had sought was a liberty to sojourn in the land of Goshen. The king ordered Joseph to assign them a dwelling-place in the best part of that province. If one district in the land of Egypt were better than another, there let the house of Joseph's father be placed. A truly grateful man will take pleasure to oblige, not only those who have done him eminent services, but also those who are related to them by blood, or connected by friendship.—¶ *If thou knowest any men of activity, &c.* Heb. *אנשי חיל* *anshe hayil, men of ability, or prowess*; implying both strength of body and competent gifts of mind; men of active habits, and of prudence, diligence, capacity, &c. See Note on Gen. 24. 29. The purport of Pharaoh's reply to Joseph was this:—'As to promoting your brethren, it does not seem to suit their calling or their inclinations, to be raised in the manner which I might have purposed in their behalf. I will therefore leave it to you to make them happy in their own way. If there be one or more of them better qualified for business than the rest, let them be appointed chief of my herdsmen.'—¶ *Rulers over my cattle.* Heb. *שרי מקנה* *sare mikneh.* 'Cattle' here is used in the comprehensive sense assigned to 'flocks,' Gen. 29. 3, including their keepers. The office in question is undoubtedly that which in 1 Sam. 21. 7, is assigned to Doeg, and expressed by the phrase 'chiefest of the herdmen.' The original word for 'rulers' is properly pre-

fects, presidents, princes, importing governors of men, and not of brute beasts. Accordingly it is well rendered by the Arab, 'Make them princes or rulers over those who are set over my herds.' See Note on Gen. 37. 2.

7. *And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh.* Heb. *יעמדהו* *yaamidehu, made him to stand, placed, stationed him.* This reference to the original at once corrects the error of Fuller's remark, that 'when the young men were presented, they stood before him; but Jacob, in honor of his years, and in compassion of his infirmities, is placed upon a seat.' Such a posture would be wholly inconsistent with the oriental ideas of etiquette, unless in consequence of a special invitation, and that from the sovereign himself, and not from a minister or attendant. Joseph was not ashamed of his brethren, or of their occupations, still less was he ashamed to call himself the son of Jacob. To be the son of this man, he accounted a greater honor than to be next to Pharaoh in the throne of Egypt, and wished his own children rather to have part with the sons of Israel, than with the posterity of Potipherah, priest of On, though doubtless one of the greatest families of Egypt. Here, as a token of respect, he introduces his venerable father to the royal presence, when the first object that meets his eye is Pharaoh sitting in his kingly robes before him. The sight of a prince who had shown such kindness to him and his family in a time of distress, calls forth the most lively sensations of gratitude which he is prompted to express by a solemn blessing. As the patriarch was habitually under the influence of an eminently pious

8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *art* thou?

9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, <sup>1</sup>The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* an hundred and thirty years: <sup>m</sup>few and evil

have the days of the years of my life been, and <sup>n</sup>have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

1 Hebr. 11. 9, 13. Ps. 39. 12. m Job 14. 1.

n ch. 25. 7. & 35. 28.

spirit, and accustomed in all circumstances to lift up his heart to God, it cannot be doubted that on the present occasion he blessed Pharaoh with a very devout frame of mind. There was none now living upon earth to whom he reckoned himself so much indebted, as to the monarch who had raised his beloved son from a dungeon almost to a throne. He saw the kind providence of God to himself in what Pharaoh had done for Joseph, and if we are to bless even them that curse us, how fervently ought we to pray for them who do us good, that the Lord may render their benefits into their own bosoms sevenfold. The word which we render *blessed* is sometimes used to denote an ordinary salutation. But the salutations used among the pious Hebrews were *re-* prayers addressed to God for the welfare of the person saluted. When one said to another, 'Peace be to thee,' or, 'The Lord be with thee,' he expressed his desire in a short prayer to God, for the best blessings to his friend or neighbor. How befitting, how affecting, how richly significant, was the present invocation, we shall see by adverting to the relation of the parties. The Apostle, Heb. 7. 7, lays it down as a truth, 'beyond contradiction, that the less is blessed of the better,' or greater. In one respect Pharaoh was greater than Jacob; but in another Jacob was far greater than he, and as he well knew it, he thought it no presumption to act on such a principle. He was a

son of Abraham, whose peculiar honor and prerogative it was, that he and his posterity should be blessings to mankind; 'I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.' He was also himself a man who, 'as a prince, had power with God and men and prevailed.' The blessing of such a man was of no small account; for God would not suffer his words to fall to the ground.

8. *And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?* It would seem that Pharaoh was not so much struck with the blessing, as with the venerable aspect of Jacob, and therefore proceeded to inquire his age. There were probably at this time older men than Jacob, but few, if any, that appeared to be older. Much had he suffered in the whole course of his life; and much had he suffered of late years from grief and anxiety. Many more years of life spent in ease and prosperity would have made less impression on his person, than a few years of such sorrows as had taken possession of his mind since Joseph was torn from him,—sorrows that were redoubled when Benjamin seemed to be in danger of coming like his brother, to an untimely end. He therefore looked perhaps older than he really was. When we see the marks of old age, we are desirous to know the number of years that one has lived. This is an innocent curiosity and may not be altogether useless. There are duties owing to the aged; and the older a man is, we should be the more careful to perform them.

He is nearer to that period of existence when he must be removed beyond the reach of our kind offices, so that if we are not careful at present to perform the duties we owe to our aged friends, relatives, and neighbors, we are almost sure that death will soon render the wrong irreparable. But it is to be regretted that a bad use is often made of our knowledge of the great age of others. We think that we may live as long as they have lived, and thus are encouraged to defer our preparation for our latter end to a period of life which we may never reach; or if we should reach it, we may find ourselves less disposed to it than we are at present. But after all it is a matter of small importance to us to know how old are our acquaintances; though it may be of great use to know and consider how old we are ourselves. The days that are past may be lost, and worse than lost to us, but they are marked down in a book that shall one day be opened. What good have we left undone that ought to have been done? What good things have we so negligently performed, that they might about as well have been left undone? Have we not lost many of our days? What if they are all lost days? What if all that has hitherto been done by us, should be produced against us in the day of trial to our condemnation? What need have we to redeem our time! Although we are yet young, we know not how few days may be left for what has hitherto been neglected; if we are old, we know that our days will not be many.

9. *And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years, &c.* The answer of the patriarch is very pathetic and impressive. We see in it a charming example of spirituality, and how such a state of mind will find a way of introducing religion, even in reply to the most simple and common questions.

How often do we go into the company of persons of distinction, and come away without once thinking of making use of the opportunity to say something 'which shalt minister grace to the hearers.' Nay, it would seem to be almost rude to attempt it. But wherefore? Because of our want of spiritual-mindedness. We may admit indeed that great prudence and discretion are needed to make such allusions effective; and we may grant, moreover, that aged persons, like Jacob, may properly use more freedom in this respect than younger Christians, for it is naturally felt that 'days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom;' but there can be no doubt at the same time, that, whatever be our age, if our spirits were more imbued with a sense of divine things, we should think of the most common concerns of life in a religious way; and so thinking of them, it would be natural to speak of them. Jacob here, in answer to this simple question, without any force or awkwardness introduces several important truths which could hardly fail to make an impression on the mind of Pharaoh. He insinuates to him that he and his fathers before him were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; that their portion was not in this world, but in another; that the life of man, though it be extended to a hundred and thirty years, was but a few days; that these few days were mixed with evil; all which, if the king properly reflected on it, would lead him to set light by the earthly glory which surrounded him, and to seek a crown which fadeth not away. It is admirable to see how all these sentiments could be suggested in so prudent, so modest, so natural, and so inoffensive a manner. In speaking as he did of the days of the years of his pilgrimage Jacob used the language which he had learned from his fathers. He speaks of *their* pilgrimage



as well as his own, and we learn from Paul, that they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, who were seeking a better country. In this sense, we all ought to consider ourselves as pilgrims, on our journey to another world, towards which we should travel as those who look for a continuing city, whose builder and maker is God.—¶ *Few and evil have the years, &c.* *Few* and *many* are relative terms. In our period of the world, an hundred and thirty years make a life of extraordinary length. But Jacob counted his years few, because they came far short of the days of many of his ancestors. Yet when he was a child in his father's house, an hundred and thirty years would appear to him a very long space of time; but now when they were gone, they appeared but as a few days. Let us attend to the testimony of this competent witness. Those years that appear many in prospect, dwindle down to a few days when we look back upon them. Let us not say, therefore, that we have yet many days of life before us, and that we will eat and drink and be merry. We know not when our souls shall be required of us. But we know though we should live an hundred years twice told, and should rejoice in them all, yet they will appear when at an end, but as yesterday when it is past! But Jacob's days were not only *few*, they were *evil* also. Certain it is, that many of the days of his life were spent in grief. Besides the years of bitterness that he spent in lamenting Joseph's unhappy fate, and the other deaths in his family, the sins of his children were the cause, not of days, but of years of sorrow. They were so heinous, that the bitter remembrance of them must have kept possession of his mind till his dying day. But to what purpose did he speak of the calamities of his life in his intercourse

with Pharaoh? Not to bespeak the pity of that prince, after all the assurances of kindness that he had received from him. Far less did Jacob intend to express any dissatisfaction with the dealings of providence towards him. He did not envy his fathers the length of their lives or their comparative exemption from evil. His aim was undoubtedly rather to administer a seasonable hint to Pharaoh of the great truth, that 'man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.' He had seen it expedient often to speak to his sons of the evil days that he had seen, and might very justly suppose that a hint on this subject would be useful to the king of Egypt. His situation in life precluded the probability that he would ever receive many admonitions on this head from other sources, and as the opportunity was afforded to Jacob of administering a seasonable hint, he wisely avails himself of it. Yet the thought is so obvious that one would scarcely think that it needed a patriarch to suggest it to a king. We certainly must be great strangers to the world and to ourselves, if we have not yet learned a lesson for which we have more than ten thousand instructions. But there is one counterbalancing view. Since there is so much evil mingled with human life, we ought rather to rejoice than to mourn that our days are few. If nothing, indeed, were to be expected beyond the grave, we would choose rather to endure all the evils of life a great while longer, than to lose our present existence. But if an eternity of joy in the presence of Christ awaits us, why should we regret the brevity of our life of sorrows?

10. *And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, &c.* As Jacob blessed Pharaoh when he came into his presence, so he again blessed him when he went out of it. From their mutual treatment of each

10 And Jacob °blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11 ¶ And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in

o ver. 7.

other, we may learn that it is a good thing to do good to good men. They will return in prayers and blessings, if they cannot do it otherwise, the favors done to them in their persons and families. The prayer of such a wrestler with God as Jacob availeth much. Whether Pharaoh ever saw him again, or whether he profited at all by the interview, we are not informed. If the words which he heard produced their right effect, upon his mind, he would look back to this meeting, short as it was, as one of the most interesting events of his life.

11. *And Joseph placed his father, &c.* Heb. יושב ירשב *yosheb, seated, caused to dwell.* Had Joseph given them a possession in the best part of the land, without express orders from Pharaoh, it might have given to the Egyptians an occasion of evil speaking not only against himself but against his father's house. But when Pharaoh commanded him to place them in the best part of the country, he not only had a right, but counted it his duty to give this testimony of his affection to his father. How richly was Joseph repaid for all his sufferings, when he was made a father not only to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but to all his father's house!

12. *And Joseph nourished his father and his brethren, &c.* Heb. יכלכל *yekalkel, sustained, fostered.* The Gr. renders it by εσιτομετρι *esitometrei, he gave them their measure of corn, (or portion of meat, taking 'meat' in the old sense of 'meal.')* A kindred term

the land of P Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren and all his father's household, with bread according to *their families.*

p Ex. 1. 11. & 12. 37. q ver. 6.

σιτομετριον, *portion of meat,* occurs Luke 12. 42, where allusion is doubtless had to the exaltation and stewardship of Joseph here recorded; 'And the lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to *give them their portion of meat* in due season?' It is needless to inquire at whose expense Joseph afforded such large supplies to his father's family. He was first just, and then generous. He was entitled to a large revenue, which would enable him to practise liberality to a great extent. It is plain, from what we have already seen, that he used no more freedom than he was expressly warranted to do with the king's property under his management. In thus performing this office of filial and fraternal care towards his father's house, he made good the title ascribed to him in Jacob's blessing, Gen. 49. 24, of 'Shepherd and Stone of Israel.'—¶ *According to their families.* Heb. לפי הסף *lephi hallaph, according to the mouth of the little ones.* That is, either according to the number, the census, of their families, small as well as great, in which sense the original of the word 'mouth' occurs, Gen. 50. 21. Ex. 12. 3; or, according to the manner of little children, whose food is put into their mouths lovingly, tenderly, carefully. It denotes that Joseph acted the part of a nursing-father to Jacob's house. Probably both ideas are included in the phrase. Thus, as the Psalmist says of David, Ps. 78. 72, 'He fed them ac-

13 ¶ And *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very sore, \* so that the land of Egypt, and *all* the land of Canaan, fainted by reason of the famine.

14 \* And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn

r ch. 41. 30. Acts 7. 11. s ch. 41. 56.

cording to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.'

13. *And there was no bread, &c.* That is, no food; by which is meant there was comparatively none; the population were reduced to the greatest straits. The narrative beginning here and ending v. 26, comes in parenthetically, as a kind of episode informing us of the state of things in Egypt, during the remaining five years of famine under Joseph's administration. The scarcity was so extreme that to purchase the necessities of life, the inhabitants were compelled to part with nearly all their possessions. What reason have we to bless God, that we have seldom or never known by experience the horrors of famine, or even the anxiety of fear about the indispensable means of living!—¶ *The land—fainted.* That is, the people of the land, as the Chal. renders it. Arab. 'The inhabitants of the land were brought to poverty.' The Syr. however has, 'The land was desolate or wasted.' Gr. *ἐξέλιπε failed, fainted.* The meaning undoubtedly is that the inhabitants both of Egypt and Canaan were so completely prostrated by the common calamity, that they sunk spiritless and inert into utter despondency. They were like a person in whom animation is suspended.

14. *Joseph gathered up all the money, &c.* Probably better rendered, 'had

which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house

15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for 'why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.

t ver. 19.

gathered up.' So in the last clause 'had brought,' instead of 'brought.' It was *after* they had parted with their money that they were reduced to such extremities. Nothing of extortion on the part of Joseph is to be inferred from these words. The people of Egypt and Canaan were willing to give all their money for corn, and were glad that they had money to give in exchange for what was so necessary to their comfort, and even to their existence. Of what use is money, but to procure the things that we need? Do we grudge to pay for what we cannot want? We have great reason to thank God if in times of scarcity corn can still be had for money, and money can be had to purchase corn. When it is said that all the money of the country was received by Joseph, the meaning probably is, that the greater part was brought to him for corn. None was left in the hands of the common people, and little in the hands of the most affluent. But Joseph did not enrich himself with that money which came abundantly into his hands. He brought it into Pharaoh's house, reserving nothing for himself but the lawful and known reward of his labor. Though he had ample opportunities clandestinely to appropriate the public revenue, yet he knew that an all-seeing eye was upon him and abhorred the thought of sinning against God. What would

16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave

them bread *in exchange* for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses; and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle, for that year.

thousands of gold and silver have availed him, if he had brought upon himself that curse which cleaves to the workers of unrighteousness?

15. *And when money failed, &c.* The Egyptians felt the famine very severely, but were not reduced to the same pitiable distress with the Canaanites, who had no Joseph among them to buy up stores of food against the time of pressing need. The Egyptians, however, no doubt deserved to feel the effects of famine, from not having been careful to lay up provision for themselves, when they should have known that the famine was coming. As in the plague of hail predicted by Moses, those of the Egyptians who feared the Lord secured their cattle and servants against it, while others lost both, so it is very probable that *some* of the Egyptians had taken warning and laid up corn for themselves. The far greater part, however, no doubt either disregarded the prediction, or trusted to Joseph to provide for their necessities. They now, therefore, reap the consequences of their improvidence. Still they were not obliged to starve, though their money was gone. There was bread, and to spare, in the king's granaries, and the disposal of it was committed to Joseph; and to him they apply, in their straits, with something of a tone of remonstrance. 'Why should we die in thy presence? The corn collected in the store-houses will be useless without eaters, and the king will be a king no longer if his subjects all die.'

16, 17. *Joseph said, Give your cattle,*

&c. But was not Joseph taking advantage of their necessities, in proposing to furnish bread to them on such hard conditions? Was it not enough for them to part with all their money, without being compelled to dispose of their horses and asses, their kine and their sheep? To this question the answer is easy. We are well assured that Joseph was not an extortioner. How could that man be an extortioner, who would rather expose himself to the danger of an ignominious death, than sin against God by yielding to the blandishments of an artful woman? How could that man be an oppressor of the Egyptians whom the people acknowledged with common consent as the preserver of their lives? Nor should it be forgotten that the corn was not Joseph's but Pharaoh's; and it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. If we should happen, in a time of scarcity, to be entrusted with the disposal of another man's corn, should we give it away gratuitously to those who should come and tell us that their money was all spent? Should we not rather ask them if they had no cattle, or any thing else as good as money? Or if they should have nothing at all to give in exchange for the necessities of life, should we on that account feel bound to give them what is not our own? Let Joseph be judged by the same rule. The truth is, it was in all probability an act of kindness on the part of Joseph to propose the measure he did; for as the people were now destitute of sustenance for their cattle, or the means of

18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle: there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands:

procuring it, their herds and flocks would otherwise have been in danger of perishing. In this, as in many passages of the scriptures, it is to be recollected that the inspired writer does not relate *all* the incidents that actually occurred. Consequently we are often required to *infer* the propriety or wisdom of *particular* measures from the *general* character of the agents. No man can pretend to say what circumstances, known or unknown to us, came under consideration in determining this point. Joseph knew them all, and was as well qualified as he was entitled to give his opinion in the king's council. For although he was prime minister, we have no reason to think that he would venture upon measures of great importance, without the opinion of other counsellors of the king. He was too wise a man to think of monopolising wisdom to himself, or to expose himself needlessly to envy or reproach. We must not think then that Joseph did not consider the case of the poor, or that he exacted of them more than was meet. While it was no *as* just to take their cattle than their money, we have every reason to believe that the policy was one of the most generous benevolence.—¶ *Fed them.* Heb. ינחלם *yenahalem*, *led them*. It is a metaphorical expression taken from the office of a shepherd who conducts his flocks to the fountains and pastures where they may be fed and refreshed; for in this occupation, a *leader* is a *provider*. The term

19 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

occurs Ps. 23. 2, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he *leadeth me* (ינחלני *yenahaleni*) beside the still waters.' Is. 49. 10, 'They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them *shall lead them* (ינחלם *yenahalem*), and by the springs of water shall he guide them.' The Gr. has ἐσθρηνεν, *nourished*, and the Vulg. 'sustentavit,' *sustained*. But the feeding and sustaining was the *effect* of the *leading* which is implied in the native force of the term.

18. *When that year was ended, &c.* By this is meant, not the second year from the commencement of the famine, but from the failing of their money. It is only extreme necessity that will extort confessions of poverty from those who have all their days been blest, in the main, with abundance. Yet to this hard necessity were the Egyptians now reduced, though it would seem from their language that if they *could* have hidden the truth of their condition awhile longer from Joseph they would. But it was useless to struggle any longer with the dire calamity that pressed them down, nor will they suffer a feeling of pride or self-reliance to prevail with them to conceal their distress from one who was able and willing to relieve them. With how much greater confidence may we have recourse to Jesus in all our distresses! 'He will deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper: He will spare the poor and

20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's.

needy, and will save the souls of the needy.'

19. *Buy us and our land for bread.* 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.' How precious are the fruits of the earth! We know not the value of them, because we have seldom or never known want. A man will give not only all that he has, but himself also, for the staff of life. Such bargains indeed are not known among us, because it is our happiness to live in a land of liberty and a land of plenty; but we may justly ask ourselves, if men pinched with poverty, were so willing to part, not only with their land, but with their liberty, for that meat which perisheth; what value should we set on that meat which endureth unto everlasting life! With what cheerfulness ought we to devote ourselves to the service of him who hath given his own flesh to be the food of our souls?—¶ *Give us seed that we may live and not die.* It was not therefore merely for sustenance, but also for sowing, that they desired seed. Their idea perhaps was that of a merely temporary alienation of themselves and their lands; and in this case, they would intimate that they needed seed to sow the ground that they might thereby produce the means of afterward redeeming themselves and their property. As they were now in the seventh year of the famine, they solicit seed for the next year's crop. They speak of the 'land's dying,' as well as themselves; but this can only be understood in the sense of lying barren and desolate. The phrase is equally

31\*

21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from *one* end of the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof.

22 \* Only the land of the

v Ezra 7. 24.

figurative with that which follows, in which the land is spoken of as being a 'servant.'

20. *Joseph bought all the land of Egypt, &c.* Though it is often said that no injury can be done to a man with his own consent, yet the saying needs limitations, for there are certainly many cases in which great injury may be done to men with their own consent. If the Egyptians had offered themselves as slaves to Pharaoh when there was no valid reason for it, Joseph could not righteously have accepted of the proffer. But it was surely better for them to sell themselves and their land to Pharaoh, than to want bread. We shall see from a subsequent note that Joseph's conduct in this transaction can be still more satisfactorily vindicated.

21. *He removed them to cities.* The meaning of this passage we conceive to be simply this; that as the numerous cities and villages throughout the whole extent of the land were converted into granaries and depots of corn from which the people were to be subsisted, Pharaoh ordered the people to be removed from the country and gathered into these cities for the convenience of distributing to them their portion of meat. This arrangement went into effect 'from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof.' This was all the translation that took place. When the famine ceased they were sent back with seed to sow their former fields. The phrase without impropriety might be rendered 'had removed.' If this be correct, their

priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion *assigned them* of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave

them; wherefore they sold not their lands.

23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought

petition for seed was in fact a petition that the regulation fixing them in cities might be abolished. This would perhaps have been a dangerous policy, had not Joseph been confident that his measures were such as would not only bear the strictest scrutiny, but could not excite discontent among the multitude. The want of bread, especially when the measures of government have been supposed to be the cause of it, strongly tends to excite nations to sedition. But Joseph had no fear of disturbances arising from this source. He cared not how many of the people were assembled in one place. Though when they met together from different points of the country, their ordinary subject of discourse would be the distress which had compelled them to sell their lands, the miseries of the famine, and the methods taken by government to relieve them; yet Joseph had no apprehensions that the tendency of such discourse would be prejudicial either to himself or to the king. Let us all endeavor so to act on every occasion, that we may have no reason to fear the scourge of the tongue. If our conduct be truly worthy of commendation, we may hope either that the voice of reproach will not be heard or that it will soon be put to silence.

22. *Only the land of the priests bought he not.* Joseph has been charged in this affair with showing an undue and blameable partiality for this class of persons, and thus favoring an odious system of priestcraft. But let it be observed that the sacred writer here speaks not of Joseph, but of Pharaoh. Joseph was not the one who assigned to the priests their revenue;

and how is he to be blamed for allowing them to retain that portion which Pharaoh had allotted, and of which it does not appear that he could justly have deprived them? The reason why the generosity of Pharaoh to the priests is here mentioned, is to account for Joseph's not buying their lands, when he bought the lands of the other Egyptians. It is strange if good men must be censured for what they do *not* do, as well as for what they *do*. The Egyptian priests, according to the constitution of the kingdom, were obliged to provide all sacrifices, and to bear all the charges of the national religion, which in those days was not a little expensive. Add to this, that the priests of Egypt were the whole body of the nobility of the land; that they were the king's counsellors and assistants in all the affairs that concerned the public; were joint agents with him in some things, and in others, his directors and instructors. They were moreover the professors and cultivators of astronomy, geometry, and other useful sciences; they were the keepers of the public registers, memoirs, and chronicles of the kingdom; and in a word, under the king they were the supreme magistrates, and filled all the prime offices of honor and trust. Considering them in all these characters, we cannot but admit that Pharaoh might justly suppose that their allowance was not disproportioned to their station, and consequently that they might properly be exempted from the burdens imposed upon the mass of the people. See the Note in the Pictorial Bible on this passage.

23. *Joseph said unto the people, &c.*

you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth *part* unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

These words, though plainly recognising the fact of their servitude, must have had a pleasant sound in the ears of the Egyptians. Six years had elapsed in which it had been useless to sow. The tillers of the earth and the earth itself had long languished under the effects of their suspended labor. But now they are told that this period is drawing to an end and that the work of agriculture is to be resumed. The people having been long sustained without the ordinary labors of the seed-time and harvest, must now again labor or perish. When men are able to work, and can do it profitably, they ought to starve, if their hands refuse to labor.

24—26. *Ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh.* Joseph had bought all the land except that of the priests, and the people had voluntarily become Pharaoh's servants. He might therefore have retained the whole in strict justice; and his reserving only a *fifth part* of the increase for the king, and remitting the rest to be their own, was an act of liberality and of good policy. Though Egypt was always a despotic country, yet as far as appears this fifth part was all the tax that the people were required to pay to the government, and a fifth of the produce is much less than the amount of all the taxes in many countries that boast of

25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: <sup>x</sup> let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, *that* Pharaoh should have the fifth *part*; <sup>y</sup> except the land of the priests only, *which* became not Pharaoh's.

x ch. 33. 15. y ver. 22.

their liberty. The people also had voluntarily sold themselves for Pharaoh's servants or bondmen; but this part of the bargain must have been, to a certain extent at least, remitted, for Joseph says, v. 24, 'four parts shall be your own,' which is not consistent with a state of absolute slavery. And when they still say, v. 25, 'we will be Pharaoh's servants,' they meant that they would own him for their lord, that they would occupy the lands as his tenants and tributaries, on the condition that they should give a *fifth part* of the produce as a yearly tax—a condition with which, as it would seem, they were perfectly satisfied; so that there is not the smallest reason for accusing Joseph of injustice or cruelty in this transaction.—¶ *Joseph made it a law.* The law was no doubt made by the king, with the advice of his counsellors; but the honor of it is given to Joseph because he was its chief and first adviser. Men of great influence have it in their power to do much good by other hands than their own. And the good they do by others, as well as by themselves, if done from proper motives, will redound to their praise and honor and glory in the day of Christ's appearing.

27. *And Israel dwelt, &c.* The sacred writer here again resumes the thread of the history of Israel. It is



27 ¶ And Israel \* dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein; and \* grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

z ver. 11. a ch. 46. 3.

not of great importance to determine whether by the name 'Israel' in this place we are to understand Jacob himself, or his family, now beginning to multiply into the great nation afterward known for many ages by the glorious name of their progenitor. It is, however, most natural to understand the name in this connexion, of the whole family, as the plural number is used concerning Israel in the last clause of the verse. Jacob's seed could not yet possess the land promised to their father. When they came into Egypt, they were only three score and ten men; but the good man not only knew by the promise that their number would increase till they became a great nation, but his eyes saw the promise going into its accomplishment. They grew and multiplied exceedingly before as well as after his death. The fulfilment of God's precious promise in the numbers of his descendants, was more pleasant to him than the joy of seeing a numerous family around him. He saw the glory of the mercy and truth of God, which hath hitherto followed him all the days of his life, and he believed that they would shower down blessings on his seed through all generations. In the mean time it was a comfort to him that his family had a separate settlement, and was not scattered among the worshippers of false gods. He might perhaps have an occasional misgiving as to the influence of the bad example of the Egyptians upon his seed when he was taken away, but a prevailing confidence in the promises would prevent its permanently affecting his peace.

28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

28. *Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.* It is highly probable that when Jacob came into Egypt he thought himself near to the end of his life, yet his term was lengthened out by the space of seventeen years. Many have lived longer in the world than they expected; but many more have died sooner. Job said, 'mine eye shall no more see good,' yet he lived an hundred and forty years longer, and spent them all in prosperity. The man in the parable, on the other hand, who said he had stored up goods for many years, lived not to enjoy them a day longer. It is highly probable that Jacob's coming to Egypt was the means of prolonging his life. He was worn out with grief in Canaan, but in Egypt he saw Joseph, and, what was still better, he saw the loving-kindness of the Lord in the life, and prosperity, and piety of Joseph, and all this had a kindly physical effect upon his aged frame. A cheerful heart does good like a medicine, and it may be presumed that the last seventeen years of the patriarch's life were his happiest years.—¶ *The whole age of Jacob was an hundred and forty and seven years.* Heb. 'The days of the years of his life.' Jacob informed Pharaoh that he had not attained to the days of the years of his fathers. Isaac lived to the age of an hundred and eighty; Abraham to the age of an hundred and seventy-five. Jacob's life was shorter than theirs, but he lived as long as he wished in the land of his pilgrimage. The vicinity of his beloved son was a support to his declining years, yet it would give him little pain to leave Jo-

29 And the time <sup>b</sup> drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, <sup>c</sup> put, I pray thee, thine hand under my thigh, and <sup>d</sup> deal kindly and truly with me;

<sup>b</sup> Deut. 31. 14. <sup>c</sup> Kings 2. 1. <sup>e</sup> ch. 24. 2. <sup>d</sup> ch. 24. 49.

seph, that he might go to Abraham and Isaac, and, what was far better, to God himself the fountain of felicity.

29, 30. *And the time drew nigh, &c.* 'Israel must die.' The man who had power over the angel and prevailed, must die. Abraham was dead, Isaac was dead, and he was not to be more privileged than his fathers. Still less can we look for any exemption on this score. Our death is every day making a nearer approach to us. To-day we are twenty-four hours nearer to our latter end than yesterday, and three hundred and sixty-five days nearer to it than we were a year ago. At all times we are inexcuseable if we endeavor not to be found ready; but those are more than doubly inexcuseable who are warned by the growing infirmities of age that death is approaching, if they neglect to prepare for the solemn event.—¶ *He called his son Joseph, &c.* Israel was not like too many of us, who put away the thoughts of death, when the decay of our bodies warns us of our approaching end. When the days were drawing near that he must die, he sent for his son Joseph to inform him of his wishes concerning the disposal of that body which was to be left behind him on earth. His injunctions on this head he prefaces with the somewhat remarkable expression, 'If now I have found grace in thy sight.' Was this the language of a father to a son? As children are not to lay up for the parents, but the

bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

30 But 'I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and <sup>e</sup> bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

<sup>e</sup> ch. 50. 25. <sup>f</sup> 2 Sam. 19. 37. <sup>g</sup> ch. 49. 29 & 50. 5, 13.

parents for the children, so should not children rather entreat the favors of their parents, than parents of their children? Yet parents on some occasions may find it proper rather to entreat than to command their children. Jacob did not forget that Joseph was in high office under Pharaoh and that he too was a husband and a father. Consequently he felt that he had no right to demand any thing from him that he could not perform consistently with the duties of these relations.—¶ *Put thine hand under my thigh.* See Note on Gen. 24. 2.—¶ *Bury me not in Egypt, &c.* Why was the good patriarch so averse to a sepulchre in Egypt? Why did he so earnestly wish to lie in death with his fathers? He certainly knew that dead bodies cannot enjoy the pleasure of fellowship with those whom they once most dearly loved. He knew that the way to heaven, at the resurrection, was equally near from Egypt as from Canaan; nor is it likely that he thought, with some of his modern descendants, of Canaan as the common rendezvous of the just, at the time when their happiness was to be completed. But it is still natural to desire to be joined in burial with those friends who were dear to us. Although we know that we can have no converse with them in that house of silence, yet it gives us some pleasure, while we yet live, to think that our dust shall mingle with the dust of those whom we love. Ja-

31 And he said, Swear unto me: and he sware unto him.

And <sup>h</sup> Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

h ch. 48. 2. 1 Kings 1 47. Heb. 11. 21.

cob doubtless had all the sensibilities of a man on this score, but still it surely was not this which constituted his chief inducement to wish that he might be buried in Hebron. Had he been buried in Egypt, he might have hoped to have his dust united with that of persons no less beloved by him than his father, and no less worthy of his love. But the Apostle acquaints us with the secret of his injunction when he tells us, Heb. 11. 22, that 'by faith Jacob gave commandment concerning his bones.' He believed the promise, that the land of Canaan should be given to him in the persons of his seed. By having his dead body conveyed to that land, he published to his seed, and to the world, that he believed and embraced the promise; that he was well satisfied, both with the country and with the security given him for the possession of it, although he was but a stranger and sojourner in it during his own life, and was laid under a necessity of leaving it before the end of his life. In this emphatic declaration of his faith, he had in view also the benefit of survivors. He hoped that when they heard of his anxiety to have his body carried to Canaan, they would all be excited to consider that land as *their* country, and to set a high value on the promise which secured it to them as their perpetual heritage.—¶ *And he said, I will do as thou hast said.* The true spirit of filial deference will not only prompt children to obey their parents in the Lord, but to give them all reasonable satisfaction of their *intentions* to comply with their wishes, especially in those things on which their hearts are set. Joseph might indeed have *done* what his father now request-

ed, yet if he had declined *promising* to do it, Jacob must have died without the pleasure of hoping that he should sleep in the same burying-place with his fathers.

31. *And he said, Swear unto me, &c.* Why did Jacob require an oath from Joseph? Did he not think his son's word as good as any oath that could be sworn? Certainly Jacob's demand of an oath was not for the confirmation of his own belief of Joseph's word, but rather to give Joseph a powerful argument with Pharaoh to obtain leave for burying his father in Canaan. It might have been hoped that Pharaoh would not have refused any favor to Joseph that he might think proper to ask. Yet it is easy to conceive that he might have feared the loss of such an excellent servant, in case he should be seized with a desire of ending his days where he had spent the sweetest time of life, and under this apprehension might have hesitated in granting him leave to revisit the scenes of his early years. To have his father's dying request, therefore, fortified by an oath would constitute a strong plea for procuring Pharaoh's consent. Joseph accordingly sware, because he wished to give his father all the satisfaction he desired, or could desire, about a matter in which he appeared so deeply interested.—¶ *Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.* Heb. יִשְׁתָּחוּ *yishtahu*, worshipped, the term usually employed to signify *worship* or *reverence*, by *bowing down toward the earth*, or even *to the earth*. In some cases it seems to denote an act of worship without the inclination of the body, as 1 Kings 1. 47, where it is said of David, in extreme old age, and confined to his bed,

'And the king bowed himself upon the bed;' i. e. worshipped God while in a recumbent posture on his bed. This interpretation might not unnaturally be given to the words in the passage before us, were it not that the Gr. version has rendered it, 'bowed himself upon the top of his staff;' (*παθὼν, rabdon*), and that this rendering has been adopted and apparently sanctioned by the Apostle, Heb. 11. 21, 'By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, (leaning) upon the top of his staff.' The reason of this diversity of rendering is that the same Heb. word, according as it is pointed in one or the other of two methods, signifies either *bed* or *staff*; *מִטָּה* *mittah* implying the former, and *מַטֵּה* *matteh* the latter. The only question therefore is, whether the present vowel-pointing of the Heb. or the Sept. mode of reading the Heb. is to be preferred. Upon this point Prof. Stuart, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, vol. ii. p. 269, remarks: 'I have no hesitation in preferring the latter punctuation; for what is the head of a bed in the Oriental country, where the bed itself is nothing more than a piece of soft carpeting thrown down upon the floor? And what can be the meaning of Jacob's bowing himself upon the head of his bed? For (1.) There is no evidence that Jacob was upon the bed when Joseph paid him the visit here recorded. It was after this that Jacob was taken sick, Gen. 48. 1, and sat up on his bed when Joseph came to visit him, Gen. 48. 2. (2.) An infirm person, lying upon a bed, if he assumed a position such as to bow himself, would sit upon the middle of the bed and not upon the head of it. (3.) In all the Scriptures, the head of a bed is not once mentioned; and for a good reason, as the oriental bed had strictly speaking no head. For these reasons I must regard Jacob as lean-

ing upon the top of his staff for support, when he conversed with his son Joseph; than which nothing can be more natural for a person of his very advanced years. In this position he was when Joseph swore to him that he would comply with the request which he had made, in respect to his burial. This was so grateful to his feelings, that he spontaneously offered up his thanks to God for such a favor, q. d. he worshipped upon the top of his staff; i. e. leaning upon the top of his staff, he offered homage or thanks to God; just as David 'worshipped upon his bed;' i. e. did homage, or paid reverence to God, while on his bed.' The dying patriarch was revived by the dutiful behavior of his dear son, and his soul was filled with gratitude to that God whose mercy he saw sweetening the last days of his life. Could he but be prompted to acts of praise and adoration? He was now indeed too feeble to perform his devotions in the manner to which he had been accustomed, and which would have been most agreeable to him. He could not go to an altar built for sacrifices of praise; but he exerted all the vigor left him, with the help of his staff, on which he leaned, and performed his devotions in such a posture as showed his reverence and joy. In the faith of the promise he worshipped God, and gave glory to him for giving him the promise; for the many assurances he had received of the truth of that promise; for all the joy and comfort derived from it in the course of his pilgrimage; and for the happy prospects before him. He blessed God that the land of Canaan was to be the everlasting possession of his seed; that both himself and his fathers had been enabled through life to exhibit a lively pattern of faith in the promise; and that he was now to be joined with his blessed progenitors, not merely in burial, but in possession

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

AND it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy father *is* sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2 And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh

unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at <sup>a</sup> Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

a ch. 28. 13, 19. & 35. 6, 9, &c.

of the better country, the heavenly Canaan.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

1. *It came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, &c.* Heb. *וַיִּבְרַח* *vayomer*, *it was told*; an instance of the impersonal idiom, precisely equivalent to the *on dit* of the French, and the *man sagt* of the Germans, of which a full exemplification is given in the Note on Gen. 16. 14. Although Jacob had sent for his son Joseph under an impression that he had not long to live yet it seems that he was still sustained sometime longer under the decays of nature, till now at length we are informed that he is seized with sickness which in all probability issued in his death. Joseph hearing of his sickness, delayed not to visit him. Children ought at all times to honor their parents; but sickness or the approaches of death call upon them for more than ordinary testimonies of affection and sympathy. Although Joseph's love to his father, was sufficient to draw him to his bedside, yet at this time he no doubt had also in view his own spiritual advantage and that of his two sons whom he took with him. He knew that from his father's lips they would hear words full of grace, and adapted to make an indelible impression upon their hearts. He had probably moreover a strong inward persuasion that the time was now come for himself and his sons to receive the parting patriarchal benediction.

2. *Behold thy son Joseph cometh unto thee, &c.* The news of Joseph's coming revived the spirit of his aged father. We all know that the mind has a powerful influence on the body, and that strong passions sometimes communicate to it an extraordinary degree of strength. Jacob felt his strength return to him when he heard Joseph's name, and exerted all his vigor to receive him with proper marks of gratitude and affection.

3. *And Jacob said unto Joseph, &c.* The grand drift of Jacob's address to Joseph was to establish his faith in God's word, and to guard him against the temptations of Egypt. With this view he begins with an account of the remarkable manifestation of God's favor to him at Luz or Bethel. This was an event which to the last day of his life he could not forget. He had doubtless spoken of it to Joseph long before this time, but the recollection afforded him so much pleasure, that he now reverts to it again, as if he wished Joseph never to forget it. He was exalted to great honor and power in Egypt, and he might need a preservative against the seductions of his present station. He might be tempted to think it better to enjoy the dignities of Egypt, than to suffer reproach with the servants of God. Jacob therefore calls back his thoughts to the vision of Bethel, and recounts the glorious promises there made to him and his seed, as an offset to the power of these temptations. Joseph

4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee, <sup>b</sup>for an everlasting possession.

b ch. 17. 8.

was high in favor with an earthly king, but what was the favor of Pharaoh to the grace of God! It was a great distinction to be the lord of Egypt, but it was incomparably greater to be a favored servant of the Most High, and to be assured of those blessings which should proceed from his special love. As God had appeared to Jacob at Bethel by the name of 'God Almighty,' it was natural that he should love to recal this name, and to dwell upon it as conveying a pledge of the fulfilment of all the divine promises, whatever apparent obstacle might stand in the way.

4. *And he said unto me, &c.* Upon comparing these words of Jacob with the account of what God said to him at Luz on the two occasions mentioned Gen. 28. 13—15, and 35. 12, though we find a promise given him of a very numerous seed, and the land of Canaan for an inheritance, yet nothing is said of the *perpetuity* of this inheritance. Yet we have no reason to think that Jacob added any unwarrantable comments of his own to the faithful and true sayings of God. He knew how to compare spiritual things with spiritual. By the words which *were* spoken to him, he was assured that the blessing of Abraham was to come upon him, and upon his posterity: and he knew that by the covenant made with Abraham, the land of Canaan was secured for ever to his seed. The term 'for ever,' it is true, is to be un-

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5 ¶ And now, thy <sup>c</sup>two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine: as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

c ch. 41. 50. & 46. 20. Josh. 13. 7. & 14. 4.

derstood sometimes in a limited sense. The earthly Canaan was secured by promise to the seed of Abraham, till the time came when God should create, as it were, a new world, by introducing a new dispensation of grace among them. Jacob understood the promise to mean that for a *long series of ages* his seed should possess the land under the divine protection. Some of his descendants have given more latitude to the expression, and understand the promise of an everlasting inheritance in Canaan to signify, that they should dwell in it as long as the earth endures. Consequently they, and those who hold the same opinion, believe that though the Jews have now lived in exile for seventeen hundred years yet the day is coming when they shall be re-instated in their ancient possessions and enjoy them undisturbed to the end of the world. As to this expectation see Note on Gen. 17. 8.

5. *And now thy two sons are mine.* That is, I adopt them and consider them as my own immediate offspring; I will have them reckoned, not as *grandsons*, but as *sons*, each of them constituting a distinct tribe, and ranking as co-heirs with the rest of thy brethren. The grounds of this proceeding are explained, 1 Chron. 5. 1, 2, 'Now the sons of Reuben, the first-born of Israel, (for he was the first-born; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given

6 And thine issue, which thou begetttest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after

the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

unto the sons of Joseph, the sons of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler, but the birthright was Joseph's:)' &c. Thus Joseph, who otherwise would have obtained but a single share of the inheritance, obtained the double portion which would have fallen to Reuben had he not forfeited his birthright. Joseph, accordingly, in the subsequent history, is reckoned as two tribes instead of one; Josh. 14. 4; Num. 1. 32, 34, Rev. 7. 6, 8. It might have seemed hard to Reuben, had not his repentance for his sin been sincere, that although he had been Joseph's only friend in his distress, his birthright was to be transferred to Joseph. Yet this was somewhat counterbalanced by the manner of expression with which his father assigned the double portion to Joseph;—'Thy two sons shall be mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.' Reuben and Simeon had been offenders, but still they were to have a portion in Israel, and were to be fed with the heritage of Jacob. The kindness shown to the two young men would be a powerful attraction to their hearts, and a means of persuading them that it was more for their interest to cast in their lot with the people of the God of their father, than with the family of Potipherah, the priest of On. They might have hoped to rise to great distinction in Egypt, if they were willing to conform to the manners of that country. But they were taught by their venerable grand-sire, that a part in the inheritance of the seed of Abraham was incomparably to be preferred to a kingdom in any

part of the world. United with them they might suffer loss, reproach, and affliction, but they would have an abundant compensation for all that they might lose or be called to endure.

6. *Thine issue which thou begetttest after them, &c.* It does not appear that Joseph ever begat any more sons, but Jacob was careful to settle his affairs with sufficient precaution, and to cut off as much as possible all occasion of dispute from his children, when himself should be laid in the dust. Many fatal contentions might have been completely obviated, if parents had always been equally careful to provide against every danger of contention amongst their offspring. Jacob spake under the direction of the Spirit of God, but the Spirit was given him only by measure. It was not given him to know whether Joseph should have any more sons of his own body than Manasseh and Ephraim; but it was made known to him, that Joseph should have a very numerous seed by these two sons. This sufficed him; and he left directions, that if Joseph should have any more immediate sons, they should take their stations in Israel under the banners of Manasseh and Ephraim.—¶ *Shall be called after the name of their brethren.* The meaning is, that in the division and distribution of the promised land, they should be incorporated into the body, and comprehended under the name, of one or other of the two brethren above mentioned, and should not, like them constitute distinct tribes by themselves. It was not usual, indeed, for children to be called by the name of their brethren; but in the present instance, as Ephraim and Manasseh had

7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, <sup>d</sup> Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath, the same *is* Bethlehem.

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, *Who are these?*

9 And Joseph said unto his

d ch. 35. 9, 16, 19.

father, • *They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place.* And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and <sup>e</sup> I will bless them.

10 (Now <sup>f</sup> the eyes of Israel were dim for age, *so that* he could not see:) and he brought them near unto him; and <sup>h</sup> he kissed them, and embraced them.

e ch. 33. 5. f ch. 27. 4. g ch. 27. 1. h ch. 27. 27.

been adopted in the place of Joseph, it was ordered that in case Joseph should have additional issue, they should be reputed as the seed of the two brethren who represented his person.

7. *As for me, when I came from Padan, &c.* By what train of thought may we suppose that Jacob was led at this time to speak of Rachel and her burial? Probably the sight of these dear children of Rachel brought their beloved mother to his mind, and he mentions her that he might add another motive of attachment to Canaan, the land where her dust reposed. What could more endear the land of promise to Joseph and his descendants, than the recollection that their mother Rachel, as well as their father, was buried in it? But in addition to this he probably intended to hint at the reason of translating the birthright blessing from Reuben to Joseph; for Reuben's incest with Bilhah happened at the place, and near the time, of Rachel's death, before Jacob had ceased to mourn for her. This was well known to the family, so that he needed not *explicitly* to say that this was the reason of the step, as he would easily draw the inference himself. Perhaps too, he would hereby express a hope that the issue which he might have expected from Rachel, but for her untimely death would now be made

up in these two sons of Joseph. It is obvious that Jacob's address was admirably calculated to produce its designed effect—to induce Joseph and his family to sit loose to Egypt.

8, 9. *And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, &c.* What is said in the immediate connexion of Jacob's defective eyesight, requires us to understand 'behold' here in the sense explained in the Note on Gen. 42. 1, to which the reader is referred. The lot of Isaac and of Jacob was alike in this, that they are so dim-sighted when they were old, that they could not distinguish the well-known faces of their own children. But it was their happiness that when they could not discern visible objects, they beheld the things which were not seen. The presence of his grandsons fills Jacob's heart with tenderness toward them, for their father's sake, and for the sake of the hopes of which they were heirs; and though he had before adopted them, yet he wished to give them the blessing, not only of a father, but of a patriarch. We cannot bestow such blessings on our children as did Isaac and Jacob on theirs. But nature disposes us to love them, and grace teaches us to show our love in earnest prayer for their welfare. Let young children behave in such a manner as to entitle



11 And Israel said unto Joseph, 'I had not thought to see thy face: and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

i ch. 45. 26.

them to the blessings of their parents. There is a promise of long life and prosperity to the children that honor their parents. This promise encourages parents to plead for the divine favor to dutiful children.

10. *Now the eyes of Israel were dim,* &c. Heb. כְּבֵדוֹ *kabedu, were heavy.* We have already seen a proof that the eyes of Israel were dim. But we shall soon see a proof that he saw what none else could see. He saw future things in the light of God. The eyes of his mind were enlightened to behold the gracious works of his God, in fulfilling his promises to himself, and to his father. This is a consolation under the loss of sight granted to few, but all believers, by the aid of that revelation which God has imparted, can behold those future things in which they are most deeply interested.—¶ *He brought them near unto him,* &c. Joseph brought near his two sons with great pleasure to Jacob. It is likely that when he brought them with him, he intended to ask a blessing for them, and now he brings them forward to receive a richer blessing than he expected. How happy were these two young men! They might have been Egyptian princes; but they accounted it a far greater happiness to be sons of Jacob, and children of the covenant made with Abraham. The embraces and kisses of the good old patriarch were far superior in value to all the honors which the king of Egypt could confer. Happy too was the dying patriarch. He was not only assured of heaven to himself, but assured likewise that Joseph, and that Joseph's seed, should

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

be blessed on earth. If his former days were few and evil, his last days were crowned with good. God can make those days which are commonly accounted the evil days of life, the best of all our days.

11. *I had not thought to see thy face,* &c. The pleasures and the bitterness of life, in their succession, greatly enhance one another. Sorrow succeeding joy is doubled, and so are joys succeeded by sorrows. When Jacob was blessed with the embraces of the sons of Joseph, he thought of the time when Joseph himself was not; 'I had not thought to see thy face, and lo! God hath showed me thy sons.' What would he not once have given to see the face of Joseph, without any sons to perpetuate his name? And now God had given him a sight, not only of his son, but of his son's sons! Joseph was now doubled to him in these children that were to be the fathers of a numerous race. It is no wonder therefore that we hear him blessing God for showing him such unexpected tokens of his favor before he left the world. The good man is preparing joys for those hours, in which they who have their portion in this life must bid an eternal adieu to all pleasure. When the patriarch says, 'God hath caused me to see thy seed,' he seems almost to have forgotten that he had lost his sight. He spoke as if he had been able not only to embrace his sons, but to feast his eyes with their blooming countenances. The sense of his infirmities and griefs was lost in the fullness of his joys.

12. *Joseph brought them out from*

13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.

14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the

younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, <sup>†</sup>guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the first-born.

15 ¶ And <sup>†</sup>he blessed Joseph, and said, God, <sup>m</sup> before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

kver. 19. 1 Heb. 11. 21. m ch. 17. 1. & 24. 40.

*between his knees.* That is, Jacob's knees, who had brought them near to embrace them. Joseph wished to station his sons in such a manner that his father's right hand, esteemed a token of greater honor, and therefore conveying the *main* blessing, might rest on the head of Manasseh, the eldest.—¶ *Bowed himself.* Not only in token of his respect to his father, but out of reverence to the divine blessing about to be pronounced. The Gr. renders it προσκυνησαν *they bowed*, i. e. all three, which is highly probable.

13. *And Joseph took them both, &c.* Joseph observed the ordinary rules of etiquette in presenting his eldest son to Jacob's right hand. The sons of Jacob no doubt sat by him according to their birthright, when they ate with him. It was natural for Joseph to think that his own eldest son should stand at Jacob's right hand to receive the blessing. He knew indeed that Jacob himself had obtained the birthright from Esau, and he knew that the same prerogative had been transferred from Reuben to himself; but Manasseh had done nothing to forfeit the primogeniture. Joseph therefore behaved with entire propriety when he placed him at Jacob's right hand, which was ever accounted the most honorable position. God might give the chief blessing to whom he pleased. But Joseph pays a proper regard to the rights of nature, till he is assured that they were set aside by God.

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14. *And Israel stretched out his right hand, &c.* The imposition of hands was designed for different purposes on different occasions. When Jacob laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph's sons, he marked them out as the persons whom he solemnly blessed in the name of the Lord. He taught them in so doing that the God who spake by the significant actions, as well as the mouth, of their venerable father, would crown them with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, with the blessing which was to come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brethren. If he had not acted by the direction of the divine spirit, he would no doubt have complied with the wishes of Joseph, by giving the preference to his first-born, as he may be supposed to have loved Manasseh as dearly as Ephraim. But he moved his hands, and spake with his tongue, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. As a man and a father, he would have been of the same mind with Joseph; but as a prophet he must give the richest blessing to him who was to partake most richly of the blessings of heaven.—¶ *Guiding his hands wittingly.* Heb. ידיו את שכלו *sikkel eth yadau*, *made his hands wise*. The appearance was as if his hands knew what they were about; they seemed to move themselves intelligently; they performed the office of the eye.

15, 16. *And he blessed Joseph, &c.*

16 The ange. " which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let ° my name be named

n ch. 23. 15. & 31. 11, 13, 24. Ps. 34. 22. & 121. 7. o Amos 9. 12 Acts. 15. 17.

That is, he blessed Joseph in blessing his sons; very much as Ham was cursed in the curse of Canaan. The phraseology recognises a peculiar identity between father and son, such as we have before had occasion to advert to. This could be no ground of regret or disaffection on the part of Joseph. A truly good and pious parent will feel as thankful to God for blessings bestowed upon his children, as for his own personal blessings. In invoking the blessing it will be observed that he speaks of God as the God 'before whom his fathers Abraham and Isaac walked;' that is, walked in a uniform course of holy obedience. They endeavored to approve themselves to him, and depended on him as their shield and salvation. Their devout deportment did not indeed of itself procure the blessing to their posterity, yet the faith which they exercised must and did evince itself in holiness of life; and the words of Jacob no doubt contain an implicit admonition to his sons to follow the example of those pious patriarchs, if they desired to be blessed with faithful Abraham. Jacob might properly have added his own name to the names of Abraham and Isaac. But perhaps he did not deem it necessary, as his own mode of life had been well known to Joseph and his sons. Or, what is still more probable, he may have thought, on account of his mis-carriages, that his name was not worthy to be ranked with the names of those holy patriarchs who were to be held in everlasting remembrance. But if so, he stood alone in his opinion. No man ever thought him inferior to

on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Isaac, or greatly inferior to Abraham. —¶ *The God which fed me all my life long.* Heb. הַרְעָה אֱתֵי *haroeh othi, which acted the shepherd toward me.* His meaning is, that the Lord had been his shepherd, and had kept and led him, as well as supplied all his wants. And he acknowledges that this kind care had been exercised toward him not only during the latter portion of his life, but *all his life long.* The Lord fed him when he was in his father's house. The Lord fed him when he procured his food by toil at Laban's house. The Lord fed him even when in Egypt his beloved son supplied all his wants. In whatever way we obtain the necessaries and comforts of life, God is the giver of them; and we ought at all times to be penetrated with a sense of that goodness which follows us all the days of our lives, which has preserved us from so many evils and loaded us with so many benefits. Second causes should not be suffered to veil from our view the primary source of all our blessings. —¶ *The angel which redeemed me from all evil.* The angel which redeemed and delivered Jacob from all evil, was not a created angel. He is clearly identified with the 'God' who is mentioned in the preceding verse. The God who fed him, and the Angel who redeemed him, are but one undivided object of his prayers, when he seeks the best blessings upon the young men whom he so dearly loved. As to the real character of this glorious personage, elsewhere called 'the Angel of the covenant,' see Note on Gen. 16. 7. The title is no doubt here given him with

special reference to his interposition in delivering him from the wrath of Esau, on his return from Mesopotamia, Gen. 32 and 33. But it is not perhaps putting undue stress upon Jacob's words to understand them as implying that Jacob was redeemed by this Angel from far worse evils than men ever had it in their power to inflict. He was redeemed from all his iniquities and from their penal consequences. The Angel-Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Savior-Christ of the New, and who but he has been in every age the Redeemer of lost men?—¶ *Let my name be named on them, &c.* Heb. יקרא ביהם שמי *yikkare bahem shemi, let my name be called upon them.* That is, let them not only be called 'Israel,' and thus become entitled to all the blessings connected with that favored name, but let them also esteem very highly the privilege of being counted in the covenant line of Abraham and Isaac, the venerable fathers of a chosen seed. He would not have them take the name of the mother's family, though to the Egyptians it appeared a far greater name than Abraham's or Jacob's. Calling one by the name of another was generally a sign of adoption, and this was very pertinent in respect to the name of Jacob himself, but not so much so in respect to those of Abraham and Isaac, for the sons of Joseph needed no adoption to make them children of these heads of their race. For the most part by a name's being called upon any one, is to be understood his being enrolled and incorporated in the stock, community, society, or polity which is considered as in some way originating from or governed by the person whose name it is made to bear. Thus God's people are said to have his name called on them, Deut. 28. 11, 'And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord.' Heb. 'That

the name of the Lord is called upon thee.' Thus too of a wife, Is. 4. 1, 'In that day seven women shall take hold of one man saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only *let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.*' Comp. 2 Chron. 7. 14. Ja. 14. 9., in both which cases the Heb. phraseology is the same. Compare also Is. 4. 1. Dan. 9. 19. 1 Kings 8. 43. Jer. 7. 10, 11. The patriarch's words no doubt have reference rather to the high appreciation and the real enjoyment of the *privileges and distinctions* connected with their pedigree, than to the mere *nominal title* by which they should ordinarily be known. He expresses his desire that they may be *in deed and in truth* what they were by *lineal descent*. Although he did not glory in the flesh, yet he justly esteemed his God, and the covenant of his God, the glory of his family; a glory which it would have been both foolish and impious in the highest degree to exchange for any thing in earth or heaven. Such honor have *all* the saints. They are not all Israel that are of Israel, but believing Gentiles are a part of the Israel of God. The name of Christ himself is named upon them. Let us all endeavor to be an honor and a praise to that worthy name by which we are called.—¶ *Let them grow into a multitude.* Heb. ידגדגו *yidgu, let them multiply like fish.* According to the purport of this prophetic blessing, the issue of Joseph, by his two sons, amounted in the time of Moses, to 85,200; a number surpassing that of any of the rest of the tribes.

17, 18. *When Joseph saw, &c.—it displeased him.* The ways of God are often so strange that his own people may be displeased with them. When the Lord smote Uzza, it is said that David was 'displeased' because the Lord had made a breach upon them.

17. And when Joseph saw that his father <sup>p</sup>laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this

p ver. 14.

It is proper however that we should satisfy ourselves as to their real motives before we bring the fact against them as a heavy charge. Such feelings sometimes arise from misapprehensions of the intent of the divine proceedings. Had Joseph thought that his father guided his hands wittingly by divine direction, when he gave Ephraim the preference, he undoubtedly would have found no fault with it, but would have adored that sovereignty which gave the preference to the youngest, while it conferred rich blessings on both. He did not know that his father's hands, as well as his tongue, were guided by the Holy Spirit; and if he mistook the elder for the younger, Joseph ascribed it to accident or to a blameless infirmity. Joseph had in fact no intention to find fault, but to set him right. His displeasure was not a sullen rude dissatisfaction at his father's conduct. Joseph was incapable of such an unnatural deportment toward such a father. Nor can we certainly infer from the incident that like Isaac he loved the first-born better than the youngest. But as the Heb. expresses it, 'it was evil in his eyes,' i. e. not conformable to his views of propriety, that an honor, which he would naturally expect, should be withheld from the eldest, and bestowed on the youngest, who did not expect it, and who would not have been hurt in

is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head.

19 And his father refused, and said, <sup>q</sup>I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly <sup>r</sup>his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

q ver. 14. r Numb. 1. 33, 35. & 2. 19, 21  
Deut. 33. 17. Rev. 7. 6, 8.

his feelings by the want of it. But it is remarkable in how many instances in the sacred history the precedence accrued to the youngest instead of the eldest. Thus Abel was preferred to Cain, Shem before Japheth, Abraham before Haran, Isaac before Ishmael, Jacob before Esau, Judah and Joseph before Reuben, Ephraim before Manasseh, Moses before Aaron, and David before his brethren. God will bestow his blessings according to his own will. We ought to have our hearts filled with thanksgivings, if he gives us an inheritance among his chosen, although he gives to others a larger share in that inheritance. If the first are made last, and the last first, what have we to say? 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

19. *And his father refused, and said, &c.* Notwithstanding Joseph was displeased with Jacob, and Jacob refused to comply with Joseph's wishes, yet there was no interruption of the kindest feelings on either side. We may sometimes refuse to grant requests to those we love simply because we love them; as on the other hand we may sometimes grant them for the directly opposite reason. Yet when we refuse to comply with the requests of our children and friends, we ought to do it in a friendly manner. Jacob did not hurt the feelings of Joseph by refusing to remove his hand from the

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, \* In thee shall Israel

s Ruth 4. 11. 12.

head of Ephraim to Manasseh. 'I know it my son, I know it. The position of my hands is not accidental and unmeaning, but intentional and significant. You have no reason to be jealous for the honor of your first-born. He is dear to me; he is a favorite of heaven; he shall be great, though his youngest brother shall indeed be greater; but the greatness of Manasseh will not be lessened in reality, or in the estimation of the wise, by the superior greatness of Ephraim.' One reason why the Most High does not follow the rules which men would prescribe to him in the distribution of his favors undoubtedly is, that we may learn not to glory in the flesh, but in the Lord. Were he to dispense his bounties according to such rules as might appear reasonable to us, high thoughts of human worth would be apt to be cherished, and losing our impressions of divine sovereignty, we should be tempted to 'sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag.'—¶ *He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great.* Gr. *ὑψωθήσεται* shall be extolled. So strongly does the spirit within us lust to envy, that we need often to be reminded that whatever be our lot we have, on the score of mercy, all that we can claim and a great deal more. Though others perhaps no better than we, may enjoy many comforts and honors of which we are destitute, yet we on the other hand may abound in blessings which others, better than ourselves, may lack. Ephraim was to be greater than Manasseh; but had Manasseh any reason to be disquieted? He too was to be great, though not so great as his brother. Jacob taught him to consid-

er what was promised to himself. that he might not envy his brother, but thank that God who had dealt wondrously with them both.—¶ *His seed shall become a multitude of nations.* Heb. מלא הגוים *melo hag-goyim, a fulness of nations.* Thus, Is. 31. 4, 'When a multitude of shepherds is called forth.' Heb. 'A fulness of shepherds.' In allusion, probably, to this form of expression, the Apostle says, Rom. 11. 25, 'Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.' We must take the word 'nation' in a peculiar sense in this passage. It does not imply a *separate people*. for they still remained a component part of the race of Israel; but the idea conveyed by the word is, that they were to become a *very numerous and powerful part of the nation*. Accordingly we find that at the first numbering of Israel in the wilderness the children of Ephraim exceeded those of Manasseh by upwards of eight thousand; and in later times it is clear that Ephraim was the chief of the ten tribes that separated themselves from the children of Judah. We have no account of the comparative numbers of the tribes; but we know that Ephraim was frequently the royal tribe and that it gave a name to the whole kingdom. When Manasseh and Ephraim were thus assured that their seed would be very numerous, they would at least be apt to feel that it would be of immense advantage to them to keep their place among the sons of Jacob. What pleasure could they have enjoyed in the prospect of thousands and millions of Egyptian idolaters deriving from them their origin? But it must have given them great satisfaction to leave an inheri-

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die; but God

t ch. 46. 4. & 50. 24.

shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

ance among God's chosen to a multitude of nations.

20. *He blessed them that day, saying, &c.* Jacob not only assured Joseph that he should be the father of two tribes in Israel, but assured him likewise that neither of them should be smaller than the other tribes. They were to hold such a rank in Israel, that when one man blessed another, he should desire no better a model of blessedness than Ephraim and Manasseh. The descendants of Israel in wishing happiness to others, shall use this saying derived from thee, namely, 'God make thee,' &c. This form of blessing, it seems, is still in use among the Jews to this day. We have a specimen of such a form of blessing in the book of Ruth, ch. 4. 4, 'The Lord make the woman that is come to thine house like Rachel, and like Leah, which two did build the house of Jacob; and let thine house be like the house of Pharez, which Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of the woman.' Manasseh had no reason to repine, but much reason to rejoice in the prospect of a seed which should make his name famous in Israel as a pattern of benediction. Yet Jacob again intimates that Ephraim was to be greater than Manasseh. As Jacob laid his right hand upon the head of the younger, contrary to Joseph's declared intention, so he names Ephraim before Manasseh. But why does the venerable patriarch give so many indications of the superior glory of the younger son? Was he not afraid of awakening the jealousy of the elder? Did he not remember what he had suffered for giving such a manifest superiority in his affection to Joseph? All

that we can say is, that it seemed good to God not only to give the superiority in his providence to Ephraim, but to signify his purpose beforehand to the heads of these tribes; and we may learn, from the frequent repetition of this instance of divine sovereignty, that it is the will of God to have his sovereignty known and acknowledged by his people.—¶ *And he set Ephraim before Manasseh.* That is, by the fact of pronouncing the above blessing upon Ephraim, he virtually assigned to him the pre-eminence.

21. *Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die, &c.* The good patriarch had suffered many sore calamities in the course of his life. He had been tossed with many tempests, but was now comforted by the sight of a peaceful haven. He could speak of his death without fear or sorrow. The joys of death far overbalance its sorrows to those who, like the ancient patriarchs, are seeking the better country. Jacob by thus speaking of his death prepares Joseph for that stroke of affliction which he might perhaps soon expect. We have heard of his transports when his father came down to live with him in Egypt. Seventeen years had now passed delightfully away in the vicinity of his father. But now the day approaches when Israel must no more be seen by his affectionate son. It was needless to conceal from him what he would ere long see with his own eyes; but his father teaches him how to endure the shock.—¶ *I die; but God shall be with you, &c.* Joseph's heavenly father could not die. His earthly father was about to leave him; but the God of his father, who was his own God, would never leave him. If the

22 Moreover \* I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand

v Josh. 24. 32. 1 Chron. 5. 2. John 4. 5.

\* of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

x ch. 15. 16. & 34. 28. Josh. 17. 14, &c.

Lord be with us, he will abundantly compensate the want of all earthly friends. Jacob however had not regard to Joseph alone in these words. He was aware that they would lose in him not only a father, but a ruler, a guide, an instructor, an intercessor with God on their behalf. 'But God shall be with you,' says the patriarch, 'he will be with thee and with thy brethren. He will preserve and bless you, and in his own time will bring you again into the land of your fathers.' He probably knew that it was determined by God that his seed should live a long time in Egypt and there be brought low by affliction, before they obtained their settlement in Canaan. But although they were to be afflicted, yet the Lord was to be their protector. As to the *manner* of their deliverance Jacob was not instructed to give them any information. Neither Jacob nor his sons knew any more on this head than Abraham was enabled to inform them, viz. that God would judge the land where they were oppressed, and would bring them out with great substance. Their business at this time was to believe and embrace the promise, to account themselves strangers when they were at a distance from the land of promise, and leave the manner of its accomplishment to God. 'Hath he said and shall he make it good?'—We have no account of the reasons why Jacob did not prepare to return to the land of his fathers, after the days of famine were at an end. Perhaps he thought that it might appear an ungrateful requital to Pharaoh for all his favors, to speak of returning to the land of Canaan as soon as the famine

was over; or the distresses of Canaan, after plenty was restored to Egypt, might render it inconvenient for Jacob's family to take up their residence in it; or the remembrance of the odium raised against him for the slaughter of the Shechemites, or other circumstances unknown to us, might render it more eligible to continue in the land of Egypt, than to return to the land of his fathers. But whatever were the reasons which governed his conduct in this respect, he still retained his attachment to the good land which God had promised, and was deeply anxious to have this attachment perpetuated in the hearts of his seed.

22. *Moreover I have given to thee, &c.* That is, I have declaratively or prophetically given; I hereby announce to thee that thou shalt come into the possession of it. In like manner the divine assurance so often made to the patriarchs, '*I have given thee this land,*' is to be interpreted, '*I will give it thee.*'—*¶ One portion.* Heb. שֵׁכֶם אֶחָד *shekem chod, one shoulder.* The Heb. term is the same with the name of the city of 'Shechem,' and was perhaps designed to hint at something peculiar in the site of the city, as for instance an *elevated* or *protuberant* piece of ground, on which or near which it was situated. It is supposed, moreover, by some critics that there is a designed *paranomasia*, a play upon words, as there is no doubt that the place referred to is in the district of 'Shechem' mentioned, Gen. 33. 18, on which see Note. Others again contend that it is spoken prophetically, in accordance with the well-known idiom by which a person is said to do that



which he only predicts. He might indeed have spoken of this conquest in the prophetic style, as if it had already been effected, to express his full persuasion that the land would be subdued by his posterity. Yet this sense seems on the whole, too remote from the more obvious meaning of the words. The more probable construction is that which takes the words as asserting an historical fact. We know that Jacob bought a portion of ground of the men of Shechem, Gen. 33. 18—20. When he left that place it is not unlikely that the Amorites invaded and took possession of it; and that Jacob, by divine direction, had subsequently driven them out with an armed force of children and servants, and perhaps of allies. These incidents, it is true, are not recorded by the sacred writer, but they may have occurred without having been mentioned in their proper place. According to the Greek version of the Sept. Shechem was the place which Jacob gave to Joseph. It is certain that the place was at least near Shechem, for we read John 4. 5, that when Jesus was passing through Samaria he came to a city called Sychar, 'near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.' It appears also from Josh. 16. 1. & 20. 7, that it came eventually into the hands of Joseph's sons, the Ephraimites. It is not to be supposed that Jacob thought of retaining this place in undisturbed possession, for his son Joseph, either as his purchase or as his conquest. It was certain that it would be occupied by the Canaanites, who would reckon themselves entitled to keep possession of it as long as they were able. It was to be reconquered, as well as other parts of the country, before the children of Joseph could obtain possession of the legacy. Nor could it be valuable for its extent to a man who was lord of Egypt. Yet on another account it

would be of high value in Joseph's eyes. It was the gift of his father, a gift of special love, a gift bestowed by him on his death-bed, at the time when he wished to leave the last token of his affection to his favorite son. As such it would be highly valued by Joseph and his posterity, and would constitute another strong bond of attachment to the promised land. And when after ages the tribes came to take possession of their several inheritances the families of Ephraim and Manasseh would have a more powerful stimulus to a vigorous effort in driving out the people of Canaan, who then held a territory which had been expressly secured to them by the last will and testament of their venerated sire. More than two hundred years passed away before the children of Israel obtained possession of this portion of ground which Jacob left them. Yet at last they obtained it and were happy in it, as a testimony of the special love of their father.

#### CHAPTER XLIX.

No characters of the ancient periods of the world appear more venerable to us than those of the three great patriarchs of the chosen nation. We are highly instructed and edified by their history; and had they left any writings behind them, they would have been read with the greatest avidity. But God was not pleased to honor them with a name in the list of the holy writers. We have reason however to be thankful that so many of their words are recorded in the inspired volume. The present chapter consists chiefly of the words of Jacob, although Moses was the writer of them. It might be called *the book of the prophecies of Jacob*; and it contains as large a portion of the oracles of God as the book of the prophecies of Obadiah, or the Epistle of Jude. In the 105th Psalm Abra-

## CHAPTER XLIX.

AND Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may <sup>a</sup> tell

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 33. 1. Amos 3. 7.

iam, Isaac, and Jacob, are called prophets; and we know that the word of the Lord came to Jacob at different periods in the course of his life. But his dying words are the most memorable of his prophecies. Under the full conviction of their solemn import and the earnest hope that his last sayings would make a happy impression on their minds, all his sons were summoned together to hear him. Living and dying, it was his anxious wish to be useful to them; and in his death, as well as in his life, he sets us an example which we should endeavor to imitate. God grant that when our time comes that we must die, we may be enabled to say something to surviving friends that will be remembered by them with advantage. We are not of course to expect the prophetic *afflatus* on our death-bed. But if we die in faith, we may leave an useful testimony behind us of the pleasantness and peace of the ways of religion. The peculiar character and great importance of the contents of this chapter, together with the intrinsic difficulties of the interpretation, no doubt warrant a more minute and critical investigation into the meaning of terms than will be found to mark most of our preceding annotations. To such an attempt it is important to premise the following remarks: (1.) That these blessings or announcements have respect mainly to the *posterity*, and not to the *persons*, of the twelve sons of Jacob. (2.) That, consequently, the materials of a just interpretation are to be sought for in the subsequent *history* of these tribes. It is only from the

you *that* which shall befall you <sup>b</sup> in the last days.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. 4. 30. Numb. 24. 14. Isai. 2. 2 & 39. 6. Jer. 23. 20. Dan. 2. 28, 29. Acts 2. 17. Hebr. 1. 2.

documents furnished in the sacred record, that the leading characteristic traits, and the most important events related of each tribe, can be determined, and the appropriateness of the predictions clearly made out. (3.) That the fulfilment of these blessings is to be traced not in *any one event*, or in *any single period of time*, but in a continuous and progressive series of accomplishments, reaching down to the latest era of the Jewish polity. (4.) That the peculiar phraseology in which the blessings are couched, has, in most cases, a verbal allusion to the *names* bestowed upon the twelve phylarchs, or *princes of tribes*, at their birth—a circumstance not indeed obvious to the Eng. reader, but palpable to one who consults the original.

1. *Jacob called unto his sons.* That is, by despatching messengers for that purpose to the different parts of Goshen in which his sons resided. The words contained in this and the ensuing verse constitute the message which was to be delivered to them. The style of the summons was such as to acquaint them with the object for which they were to be convened.—¶ *That I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.* Heb. באחרית הימים *baaharith hayamim*, in the *sequency* or *posteriority* of days; or as Faber significantly, but somewhat uncouthly renders it, *in the afterhood of days*. Gr. ἐπ' ἔσχατων ημερῶν *in the last days*. Chal. 'In the end of days.' Arab. 'After these days.' The phrase does undoubtedly in some instances, in the prophetic writings, imply the time subsequent to the appear-

2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

c Ps. 34. 11.

ance of Christ in the flesh, or what is familiarly termed the *gospel dispensation*; but in the present connexion we are probably to take it as simply equivalent to *hereafter, afterward, in future*; denoting not a precise or limited period, but an indefinite tract of subsequent time, even the whole extended interval between the deliverance from Egypt and the coming of the Shiloh in the person of the Saviour. Thus that which in Acts 2. 17, is rendered, 'It shall come to pass *in the last days*,' is in Joel 2. 28, 'It shall come to pass *afterward*.' Farther instances of the usage of the original, which is generally rendered 'in the latter time,' may be seen, Num. 24. 14. Deut. 4. 30. Dan. 2. 28. 'I will tell you what shall befall you in the latter days.' They were all to be in their graves before the last days, and yet the things foretold were to befall them. This is on the ground of the intimate relation or constructive identity of fathers and children so often recognised in Scripture. They could not but reckon themselves deeply interested in the fortunes of their children at the distance of many generations, and were bound to give thanks to God for all the good and great things which he had promised to do for the latest of their posterity. We cannot know what will happen in the last days to our posterity, or whether we shall have a posterity on the earth at the distance of an hundred years or of one year. But if we can commit our own souls and bodies with confidence to God, we may look for good things in every generation to the church of Christ, in which we hope our own seed will be included, if a seed is left to us on the earth. If such

hopes enable us to look forward with cheerfulness to future times, it will be our hearts' desire and our earnest endeavour to communicate the knowledge and the love of pure and undefiled religion to the children whom God is pleased to give us. We shall thus resemble Jacob as fathers, if not as prophets.

2. *Gather yourselves together, and hear, &c.* If all parents are entitled to respect from their children, such a man as Jacob, who received from God the glorious name of ISRAEL for himself and his seed, might expect a very high degree of reverence from the men who had the honor to call themselves his children. Such a father deserved at all times to be heard with attention by his sons, but most of all at this time. He was going from them to God. He spake by divine inspiration of things most deeply interesting to them. He was about to leave them his dying benedictions; and how ungrateful as well as stupid must they have been, if they had not given the most diligent heed to the things that proceeded from his lips? True, he was about to utter prophetic oracles in which there was much that was dark and hard to be understood, much that they probably were entirely at a loss at present to understand. But they no doubt learnt enough from them to establish greatly their faith and hope in their father's God, and to assist them in preparing their children after them to meet those happy or disastrous events of which they had a dim but assured foresight. So let us regard the prophecies of Scripture with profound reverence. Let us beware of thinking those parts of the sacred volume use-

3 ¶ Reuben, thou art <sup>d</sup> my first-born, my might, \*and the

d ch. 29. 32. e Deut. 21. 17. Ps. 78. 51.

less of which we cannot fully comprehend the meaning. The prophecies concerning the Messiah and the first advent were but imperfectly understood by the ancient church. Yet many thousands in Israel were saved by the faith of them. Surely the sons of Jacob could not be under more sacred obligations to listen to the predictions of their father though dignified with the name of Israel, than we are to attend to the revelation made to us by the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who hath prevailed to open the sealed book and to loose the seven seals thereof.

3. *Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, &c.* Heb. כֹּהִל *kohi*. The original term כֹּהֶל *koah* implies that degree of bodily vigor which results from the full proportion and the healthy state of the *fluids* of the system, or an abundance of *moisture*, in opposition to a *dry, withered*, and consequently *languid* state of the animal economy. This sense of the word is illustrated by the Psalmist's use of it, Ps. 22. 15, 'My strength (כֹּהֶל) is dried up as a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.' It is employed to express the highest state of corporeal vigor in the case also of Caleb, Josh. 14. 11, 'As yet I am strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength (כֹּהֶל) was then, even so is my strength (כֹּהֶל) now.' It is here used, by a common figure of speech, for the first effect of his physical strength, or the child begotten in the flower and prime of his manhood. A similar usage occurs in Job 31. 39, where the 'fruits' of the earth are made to stand by metonymy for the *vegetative principle* from which

beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

they spring; 'If I have eaten the *fruits* (כֹּהֶל) thereof without money.' By the Gr., Chal., and most of the ancient versions it is rendered 'strength.' —¶ *The beginning of my strength.* Heb. רֵשִׁית אֹנִי *reshith oni*, equivalent to the *first fruits of my potency*, an expression very nearly synonymous with the preceding, and rightly rendered by the Gr. ἀρχὴ τελευτῶν μου *the beginning of my children*—the beginning not only in the order of nativity, but in the grade of eminence. A similar denomination is given to the first-born, Deut. 21. 17, 'Giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength, (רֵשִׁית אֹנִי) the right of the first-born is his.' Ps. 105. 36, 'He smote all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength,' (רֵשִׁית אֹנִי). —¶ *The excellency of dignity and power.* Heb. יֵתֶר שְׂאֵת *yether seath*, the abounding excellency of eminence; in allusion to the honor of the *priesthood*, involved in the birthright, as 'the excellency of power' has respect to the *right of dominion*, another branch of the same distinction. The Heb. word שְׂאֵת *seath* translated *dignity*, properly implies *elevation*, and is the term employed in reference to Cain, Gen. 4. 7, 'And if thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?' (שְׂאֵת) or rather, 'If thou doest well, is there not *elevation*?' i. e. shalt thou not be entitled to all the prerogatives of the birthright? The pertinency of the ancient Targums to this point is very striking. Chal. 'Thou wert to have received three portions, the birthright, (i. e. the double portion,) the priesthood, and the kingdom; but because,' &c. Jerus. Targ. 'And for the sin of my son Reuben,

4 Unstable as water, 'thou shalt not excel; because thou

f1 Chron. 5. 1.

the birthright is given to Joseph, the kingdom to Judah, and the priesthood to the tribe of Levi.' This interpretation is so fully confirmed by 1 Chron. 5. 1, 2, that we cannot doubt of its correctness.—¶ *Excellency of power.* Heb. יֶתֶר *yether oz*, the abounding excellency of strength or puissance. The original is derived from a root signifying *strong, firm, hard, valid*; and is repeatedly applied to kings and kingdoms, as characteristic of that prevailing strength by which dominion is usually obtained and upheld. Thus, Ps. 99. 4, 'The king's strength also loveth judgment.' Ps. 110. 2, 'The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.' Is. 30. 2, 'That walk to go down into Egypt to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh.' The terms 'dignity' and 'power' therefore are rightly interpreted, the one of the sacerdotal, the other of the regal prerogative, included in the birthright. Arab. 'Excelling in nobility and excelling in magnificence.' Reuben's exclusion from this honor was in punishment for his grievous offence against his father; and he was expressly informed by his father's dying words, what glory his posterity might have enjoyed, if his transgression had not robbed them of the privileges which would otherwise have fallen to their lot. Reuben was probably pardoned by God. But for his own humiliation, and for a warning to other men, it was expedient to give him this solemn rebuke; and to put him in mind of what he had forfeited, not to himself only, but to his posterity.

4. Unstable as water. Heb. פָּחַז

wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

g ch. 35. 22. 1 Chron. 5. 1. Deut. 27. 20.

פָּחַז *pahaz kammayim*. Gr. ἐξυβρίσας *ως ὕδωρ* *thou hast been insolently injurious as water*, i. e. as water that overflows its banks. Chal. 'But because thou hast followed thine own will as water poured out.' Sam. and Syr. 'Thou hast been violent and flowed down like water.' The allusion is to Reuben's incestuous connexion with Bilhah, his father's concubine; Gen. 35. 22. The original word פָּחַז *pahaz* in its primitive sense signifies a precipitate motion, as of a stream breaking through impediments, or running down a declivity. Its derivatives have the import of *rash, light, dissolute, licentious*. Thus, Judg. 9. 4, 'Abimelech hired vain and light persons;' Heb. פָּחָזִים *pohazim*. Zeph. 3. 4, 'Her prophets are light and treacherous persons;' Heb. פָּחָזִים *pohazim*. It is a term well adapted to express both the unbridled lawlessness of Reuben's conduct in the indulgence of his passions, and the effect of it in suddenly and irretrievably casting him down from his birthright. The force of a great current of water, when the barriers that restrained it are removed, is irresistible. Such is the force of corruption in men destitute of religious principle. Yet nothing is weaker than water in small quantities. It has no principle of coherence or stability. Such is the weakness of men who walk after their own lusts. They have no power to resist the most pernicious temptations, or the most inordinate and detestable impulses of their own corrupt minds. Whether the instability or the impetuosity of water is principally intended by the term, it is perhaps impossible, and not very necessary, to determine. Perhaps both ideas

are included. Reuben's wickedness was a plain evidence of his own lamentable weakness, and of the dreadful power of corruption within him. He had as little power to restrain his lusts as water has to preserve itself from falling to the ground, when it is poured from the vessel that contains it. He rushed on to the commission of a crime which was to load him with guilt and infamy, with the irresistible impetus of a mighty river when it comes up over all its channels, and goes up over all its banks, Is. 8. 7. To gratify a momentary inclination he violated all the laws of honor, of natural affection, of God, and of man. He might have seen, if his eyes had not been blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, that by going up to his father's couch he would purchase a moment's pleasure at the expense of everlasting disgrace to himself, of enduring anguish to a venerable father, of a grievous stain to his posterity, and of the vengeance of heaven upon his immortal soul, if sovereign mercy should not be pleased to interpose.—¶ *Thou shalt not excel.* Chal. 'Thou shalt not have profit nor receive the excellent portion.' Sam. 'Think not thyself excellent.' Syr. 'Thou shalt not stand.' All these various renderings concur in expressing the main idea, viz. that Reuben had cut himself off from all prospect of holding that pre-eminence in Israel to which he would otherwise have been entitled. Accordingly we learn from the sacred narrative that this tribe, which was few in number, and reproached for their pusillanimity by Deborah, never distinguished themselves by any noble exploits. None of the ancient heroes whose names are yet famous belonged to this tribe. Neither the priesthood nor the royalty was given to the tribe of the first-born of Jacob. Though there were kings of the different tribes, yet none, as far

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as we know, of the tribe of Reuben. There were doubtless many of the sons of Reuben who found favor with God, 1 Chron. 4. 5, but none of them obtained such glory in this world as many of the other tribes obtained.—¶ *Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed.* He ought, above all his brethren, to have been a defence to his father against any invader of his honor or his property. But there was not one of the thirteen children of Jacob that inflicted more painful wounds on their father's heart. The injury done to Joseph was not so irreparable. The murder of the Shechemites was indeed not less but more criminal, and yet it was not such a direct outrage against the man whom of all others on earth he was bound to reverence. It was a violent assault upon the tenderest point of his honor. It was an outrageous attempt to tear away from him a part of his own flesh, and make it the fuel of everlasting burning. He corrupted Bilhah, whom Jacob was bound to love as a part of himself, and involved her in such wickedness as that which brought down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. Could Reuben then expect the first place of honor in his father's family? He had reason to wonder that he was not turned out of it with disgrace, and set up, like the sinners of Sodom, a monument of wrath to all generations. Still it should be remembered that Jacob spoke the language of indignation concerning the shameful conduct of Reuben, not because he hated, but rather because he loved this unnatural son. He acted toward him the part of a faithful friend, as well as a wise father, when with his dying breath he endeavored to pierce his heart with a just sense of the enormity of his guilt. He was certainly struck with bitter remorse long before this time. It is to be hoped that he had exercised repent-

5 ¶ <sup>h</sup> Simeon and Levi *are* <sup>i</sup> brethren; <sup>k</sup> instruments of cruelty *are* in their habitations.

6 O my soul, <sup>l</sup> come not thou into their secret; <sup>m</sup> unto their

<sup>h</sup> ch. 29. 33, 34. <sup>i</sup> Prov. 18. 9. <sup>k</sup> ch. 34. 25. <sup>l</sup> Prov. 1. 15, 16. <sup>m</sup> Ps. 26. 9. Eph. 5. 11.

ance unto life. But after such a transgression it became him all the days of his life to remember with shame, how he had disgraced himself, how he had lacerated the heart of his father, and especially how presumptuously he had sinned against God. The mourning of the true penitent is not at an end when he has obtained a good hope through grace that iniquity shall not be his ruin.—¶ *He went up to my couch.* Heb. עלה *alah*. If the verb 'went up' legitimately refers to Reuben, Jacob must be conceived as abruptly turning from him, under the influence of strong indignation, and addressing himself to his other sons. The Gr. however changes the person and renders it, 'On which *thou* wentest up.' So also the Chal. 'When *thou* wentest up to my couch.' Ainsworth, Venema, and others, support a different construction. They consider the proper subject of 'went up' to be 'excellency' in the preceding verse, and would render the passage thus; 'Thou shalt not excel, because thou wentest up to my bed; then thou defiledst my couch; it (thine excellency) has vanished away.' This sense of the Heb. verb *to ascend, to go up*, is confirmed it is said by the following instances of its occurrence, Ex. 16. 14, 'When the dew that lay was *gone up*;' i. e. had vanished. Jer. 48. 15, 'Moab is spoiled and *gone up*;' i. e. has entirely disappeared. The whole may be paraphrased thus: 'Thou, Reuben, art my first-born, the son begotten in the prime and vigor of my days, and inheriting by birth all the privileges of

assembly, <sup>n</sup> mine honour, be not thou united: for <sup>o</sup> in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall.

<sup>n</sup> Ps. 16. 9. & 30. 12. & 57. 8. <sup>o</sup> ch. 34. 26.

primogeniture. But to thy shame and my own grief, this favored distinction thou hast forfeited. Thine ungoverned passions have hurried thee down, like a rushing torrent, from the height of thine hereditary honors, and now nothing awaits thee but comparative degradation among thy brethren. Think not to excel; for from the time of thy foul invasion of the sanctity of a father's bed all thy fair prospects of pre-eminence vanished into air, like the dew and the vapors of the morning.'

5. *Simeon and Levi are brethren.* Reuben was not the only great offender in Jacob's family; his two next sons were guilty of a crime still worse, if possible, than Reuben's. If it did not wound their father in a part so tender, it gave him not less pain, and exposed him to greater mischief. If a merciful providence had not wonderfully preserved him, he and all his family must have been destroyed, in consequence of the revenge of the enraged Canaanites. 'Simeon and Levi are brethren;' i. e. not only by nature, but by character, and disposition; possessed of a congenial spirit. Moses and Aaron were brethren, but in a very different sense. They were brethren not only in the flesh, but in the Lord, and in the noblest virtues. Simeon and Levi were brethren in wickedness. This was evinced by their being associated in the nefarious murder of the Shechemites, and it is the uniform tradition of the Jews that Simeon and Levi were the principal movers of the wicked conspiracy against Joseph. From their

standing next to Reuben in the order of seniority these two would have been the fairest candidates to have had the entire honors lost by Reuben conferred upon them, but in consequence of their misconduct they are wholly passed by, and Judah and Joseph selected as the objects of the honorary distinction. For this reason *they* are the only ones of the number besides Reuben who are addressed in the second person; all the rest being spoken of in the third. Seldom have two children of the wicked one perpetrated actions more horrible than did these two sons of Jacob; and their relation to Jacob was a very great aggravation of their wickedness. They were trained up in the knowledge of God; they were circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin; yet they were brothers in fraud and violence, in treachery and murder. Let all associates in sin consider the detestation which Jacob, and which the Spirit of God, expresses against confederacies in evil. Let them take no comfort from the thought that each of them is no worse than his companions. What will it avail one in the world of woe to know that he has associates in torment?—¶ *Instruments of cruelty* are in *their habitations*. Heb. כְּלֵי מִכְרֵיהֶם *kele hamas mekerothem*, rendered in the margin, 'their swords are weapons of violence;' the reason of which is that the Heb. מִכְרֵה *mekarah* has apparently so close an affinity with the Gr. μάχαρ *machara*, *sword*, that the translators supposed the latter to have been derived from the former, and therefore afforded a clue to the proper rendering. But in no other instance has it the remotest relation to such a sense, nor is there any thing in fact besides the outward form of the words which could lead to the supposition of a kindred import between them. Neither is there authority for rendering it 'habitation,' as is

done in the Eng. version. The weight of evidence in respect to the origin of the word is in favor of its derivation from מָכַר *makar*, *to sell*, a term which easily yields the sense of *bartering*, *bargaining*, *compact*. Thus the Gr. translates it, 'They finished the iniquity of their *chosen counsel*.' Sam. 'They consummated the wickedness of their *conventions*;' (i. e. compacts.) Jer. Targ. 'Their counsel.' The correct rendering of the sentence probably is, 'Instruments of violence are their bargainings, or covenants;' i. e. they abuse their compacts to the injury of others in such a manner as to render them the means or instruments of the most outrageous violence. In this case the allusion we conceive is both to their treacherous compact with the Shechemites, and to the cruel covenant by which Joseph was sold to the Midianites, Gen. 37. 27, 'Come let us sell him (נִמְכְּרֵנוּ *nimkerenu*) to the Midianites.' As Reuben was not present at this transaction, we may suppose that Simeon and Levi acted the principal part in the plot, though first suggested by Judah, Gen. 37. 23—29.

6. *O my soul, come not thou into their secret.* Heb. בְּסֵדֶם אֶל חִבְאָם *besodam al tabo*, into *their secret* thou shalt not come. That is, into their secret assembly, their conclave, their place of private deliberation. Thus, Ps. 64. 2, 'Hide me from the *secret counsel* of the wicked;' Heb. 'From the *secret* of the wicked.' Ps. 89. 7, 'God is greatly to be feared in the *assembly* of the saints;' Heb. 'In the *secret* of the saints.' Jer. 15. 17, 'I sat not in the *assembly* of the mockers;' Heb. 'In the *secret* of the mockers.' Gr. 'Into their counsel let not my soul come.' Chal. 'My soul was not in their secret.' Targ. Jon. 'In their counsel my soul had not complacency.' Arab. 'Into their conspiracy my soul did not enter.' The Sam., Syr.,



and Jerus. Targ. also render it in the past. The future form of expression in the original undoubtedly warrants our established mode of rendering, and yet it is a natural enquiry why the *past* tense is not employed; why Jacob does not say 'came not in' instead of 'shall not come in?' The drift of the words is undoubtedly to disclaim all participation in the bloody deed to which he alludes. But while he would thus unequivocally disown all concert and connexion with his perfidious sons in that transaction, viewed as a past fact, he adopts a phraseology implying that he had the same views of it *now* as he had *then*. Time had not in the least changed his feelings in regard to it. His soul revolted with the same holy abhorrence of the act now as it did then. It was a conduct which he could neither *now* nor *ever* regard but with shuddering and indignation. It was therefore equivalent to saying, 'Let me never be considered as associating myself with the plotters of such nefarious wickedness. Let not my name suffer by my paternal relation to such ruthless assassins. Let it never for a moment be supposed that I could sanction such a fiendish confederacy as theirs.' He thus felicitates himself that he can leave the world guiltless of all connivance at the horrid crimes of these two sons. Parents may be taught by this to beware of bringing the guilt and dishonor of their children's sins upon themselves by justifying or extenuating them. Shall sin cease to be sin because *our* children have committed it? Though our children are dear to us, yet the law of God ought to be dearer. If we love them let us endeavor to make them sensible of the evil of their conduct. When parents discover a becoming detestation of the offences of their children, they redeem at least their own credit. Why should any man expose himself

to be charged with a share in that guilt which he detests? — ¶ *Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united.* Heb. כְּבוֹדִי *keboai, my glory.* This may be of equivalent import with the former expression, 'my soul;' but it is more probably used to signify 'tongue,' which is sometimes called 'glory.' Thus, Ps. 16. 9, 'Therefore mine heart is glad, and *my glory* rejoiceth;' explained by the Apostle, Acts 2. 26, 'Therefore did mine heart rejoice, and *my tongue* was glad.' Gr. 'And in their contentions let not my inward parts contend.' Chal. 'In their congregations let not my glory be convened.' Syr. 'In their assembly I have not fallen from my glory.' Targ. Jon. 'And when they were assembled against Shechem to destroy it, my soul did not unite itself.' Simeon and Levi no doubt held several secret consultations between themselves, or with other persons whom they took into a partnership in their guilt, for they could not perpetrate their daring enterprise without the aid of many other hands than their own. It is not to be questioned that some, perhaps the greater part of their brethren, were drawn into the horrid conspiracy. These were indeed less guilty than the contrivers of the wickedness, but they were far from being guiltless. Let us beware of imagining that we are free from the blame of a bad action because we were tempted by other men to do that which we should not otherwise have done. Perhaps Adam might not have eaten of the forbidden fruit, if Eve had not tempted him; and Eve might have retained her innocence, if she had not been seduced by the serpent. Yet neither Adam nor Eve was suffered to remain in Paradise. — ¶ *In their anger they slew a man.* Heb. אִישׁ *ish, a man,* or perhaps more properly *the man,* one who was in a high sense and emphatically *a man*, as the Heb. אִישׁ *ish* is not

unfrequently used to signify *an honorable man* in contradistinction from אדם *adam*, a common or inferior man. In this sense the term is here usually understood by commentators to have reference to Hamor or Shechem, slain by Simeon and Levi. Others understand it as a collective singular for the plural, implying a great number of men slain on the occasion referred to. Without absolutely excluding the above sense, we are rather inclined to interpret it of Joseph, called emphatically *a man* or *the man* from his pre-eminent worth. That the word is sometimes employed in this emphatical sense is clear from repeated instances of scriptural usage. Thus, Jer. 5. 1, 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know; and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find *a man* (איש), if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.' i. e. a real man, one truly entitled to the appellation. Comp. Ezek. 22. 30. And thus the Psalmist in express reference to Joseph, Ps. 105. 17, 'He sent *a man* (איש) before them, even Joseph, was sold for a servant.' Indeed it is somewhat remarkable how frequently in the foregoing history this term is applied by way of emphasis to Joseph. Thus, ch. 42. 30, '*The man*, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us,' &c., v. 33, '*And the man*, the lord of the country, said unto us,' &c., ch. 43. 3, 'And Judah spake unto him, saying, *The man* did solemnly protest unto us,' &c., v. 7, 'And they said, *The man* asked us straitly of our state,' &c. This 'man' his two brethren *intentionally* slew; their conduct toward him was prompted by *murderous motives*; and they are therefore charged with the deed. This is more especially attributed to Simeon and Levi for the reason, we believe, that they were the prime instigators of the bloody project which as we have

before remarked, Gen. 37. 20, is the generally admitted tradition of the Jews. — ¶ *In their self-will they digged down a wall.* The original term for 'self-will' (רצון *ratzon*) signifies rather *pleasure, delight, a strong complacency in or propensity toward an object*, and is designed we think to express rather the *willingness* and *desire* which would have prompted such an action, than the *obstinacy* with which they actually accomplished it. This will appear more clearly in the sequel. The marginal reading, it will be observed, is, 'In their self-will they houghed oxen.' Understood in reference to the affair of the Shechemites, this of course will be interpreted of the carnage and desolation which marked that fearful scene. They not only murdered the inhabitants, but with savage fury butchered or disabled the cattle. The Heb. phrase is עקרו שור *ikkeru shor*, where שור *shor*, *ox* is written with precisely the same letters as שור *shur*, *wall*, all the difference being in the vowel-points. As the word here is *shor*, *ox*, and not *shur*, *wall*, it ought doubtless so to be rendered, as indeed it is by several of the ancient versions. Thus the Gr. 'In their lusting they cut the hamstrings of the bull.' Sam. 'In their pleasure they houghed the ox.' As the whole structure of this address of Jacob to his sons is poetical we are inclined to consider the 'ox' as a symbolical term for Joseph. In this interpretation we are countenanced by the language of Moses in the parallel benediction, Deut. 33. 17. Speaking of Joseph; 'His glory is like the firstling of his bullock; and his horns are like the horns of unicorns.' Thus also the Jerus. Targ. 'In their wilfulness they sold Joseph their brother, who is likened to an ox.' In the elevated and figurative style of prophecy, for reasons soon to be given, Joseph might be styled an 'ox,' and his brethren may

7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce: and their wrath, for *it was* cruel: P I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

p Josh. 19. 1. & 21. 5, 6, 7. 1 Chron. 4. 24, 39

be said to have done *what in them lay* to 'hough the ox,' when they sold him into Egypt, and thus endeavored to frustrate the fulfilment of his dreams. This was their 'self-will,' i. e. their *willingness, their desire*, that which they *would have been pleased* to do. In accordance with this interpretation, it has been maintained by several learned commentators that the Egyptian god Apis or Serapis, who was worshipped under the form of an 'ox,' was no other than Joseph, the son of Jacob, whose eminent services to that nation led them at length to preserve and honor his memory by enrolling him among their deities. That the 'ox' would be a suitable hieroglyphic for such a benefactor will be evident if we bear in mind the fact of his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams of the fat and lean *kine*, and consider the serviceableness of this animal in ploughing the field for the production of *corn*, and in treading it out preparatory to its being ground and converted into bread. All these circumstances would render the 'ox' a very apt emblem of one who like Joseph had sustained the office of *provider of food*. And we see not why the spirit of prophecy, which deals in the most figurative terms, might not have given this symbolical denomination to Joseph in allusion to this very fact. It is also worthy of notice that the Egyptian Apis was anciently represented bearing a *bushel* on his head, indicating, in all probability, the circumstance of Joseph's having distributed the corn by *measure* to the necessities of the people. Finally, as a confirmation of this view of the subject, it may be observed that 'bulls,' in Scripture, are interpret-

ed in several instances by some of the ablest critics as a figurative expression for *nobles, potentates, great men*. Thus, Ps. 22. 12, 'Many *bulls* have compassed me; strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.' Ps. 68. 30, 'Rebuke the company of spearmen and the multitude of *bulls*, with the *calves* of the people;' i. e. *leaders* and *followers*.

7. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath for it was cruel.* That is, detestable be their anger and wrath. Let it be an abhorrence to all flesh. There is a kind of anger which deserves not to be cursed, but to be blessed. Such was the anger of Moses when he came down from the mount, and seeing the idolatries of the camp of Israel, broke the tables of the law which he held in his hands. Such was the anger of Phineas when he pierced the bodies of Zimri and Cozbi with his javelin, in his zeal for the Lord. But the anger of Simeon and Levi was entitled neither to commendation nor apology. On the contrary, what rebukes and execrations were merited by their fierce rage which involved them in the guilt of such an atrocious massacre! Had they gone down to the pit, would they have deserved more pity than Dathan and Abiram? Yet they were spared, and had reason to be thankful that their father, as the organ of the Spirit, cursed only their *anger*, and not their *persons*. He entertained no hatred against them, he loved their souls, and therefore declared their anger to be execrable, that they might think of it with remorse, and implore that mercy which could alone free them from the guilt they had incurred. The severe reprehensions that humble us are far better than the ap-

8 ¶ *ⁱ* Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; *ⁱ* thine

q ch. 29. 35. Deut. 33. 7. r Ps. 18. 40.

plause that foment our pride and self-complacency. Sharp rebuke is necessary for those who have greatly offended.—¶ *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.* That is, I predict or announce that they shall be divided. Thus Ezek. 43. 2, ‘When I came to destroy the city,’ i. e. to foretel its destruction. See Note on Gen. 19. 13. The words are properly the words of God spoken by the mouth of Jacob. He assigned the posterity of Simeon and Levi their dwelling in Israel, but to testify his abhorrence of their iniquity, their descendants were to be divided or scattered through the land. The other tribes were to have their inheritance in a chosen tract sufficient to contain their whole number, that they might live commodiously together, and be ready to give mutual assistance to their brethren when it should be necessary. But the tribes of Simeon and Levi were to be dispersed into different parts of the country, and their friends and brethren might live at such a distance as to be unable to unite for their general benefit. The tribe of Simeon, as we learn from Josh. 19, was in great measure merged in that of Judah; ‘And their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah;’ while that of Levi had their cities assigned them in the midst of the other tribes, all over the land of Canaan, Josh. 21. 2, 3, &c. The dispersion of Levi, however, in consequence of their commendable zeal on a particular occasion, Ex. 32. 27–29, was converted to a blessing by their having had the honor of the priesthood conferred upon them, in consequence of which they became

hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; *ⁱ* thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.

s ch. 27. 29. 1 Chron. 5. 2.

teachers of the law, in the schools and synagogues of Israel. Deut. 33. 10, ‘They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.’ The Jerus. Targ. thus paraphrases the passage; ‘I will therefore divide the tribe of Simeon, that they may become scribes and teachers of the law in the synagogues of Jacob, but the tribe of Levi will I distribute that they may preside in the assemblies among the sons of Israel.’

8. *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.* Heb. יְהוּדָה אֶתְּךָ יִרְדּוּן אֶתְּךָ *yehudah attah yoduka ahaka*. Of all the sons of Jacob who now received a blessing only Judah and Joseph are expressed in the second person; the rest are all spoken of in the third. This is because the principal prerogatives were to redound to them. The phraseology of the original is so constructed as to involve a paranomasia, or what would be termed in English *a play upon words*, in respect to the name of Judah, which signifies *praise* or *confession*. It is as if he had said, ‘Judah, *praised* is thy name, and *praised* shalt thou be.’ A more exact rendering is, ‘Thou art he whom thy brethren shall confess;’ i. e. shall acknowledge as superior; shall recognise and honor as possessing the *regal* part of the birthright. Jerus. Targ. ‘Judah, to thee shall all thy brethren confess, and by thy name shall all the Jews (Judeans) be called.’ From him too the land of Canaan was called *Judæa*. A far more important reason, however, for the ‘praise’ or ‘confession’ which is here prophetically

9 Judah is 'a lion's whelp; gone up: ' he stooped down, he from the prey, my son, thou art couched as a lion, and as an old lion: who shall rouse him up?

† Hos. 5. 4. Rev. 5. 5.

v Numb. 23. 24. & 24. 9.

secured to Judah was, that not only the royal house of David descended from him, but that he was the progenitor according to the flesh of the Messiah, whose kingdom is everlasting. Heb. 7. 14, 'For it is evident that our Lord sprung out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.'—¶ *Thine hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.* The intrepid and successful bravery of the men of Judah was often the subject of admiration. As soon as the tribes of Israel sent forth separate armies against the Canaanites, the tribe of Judah gained a high distinction which was well maintained in succeeding generations. The fiercest giants about the region of Hebron could not stand before Caleb and his brave associates. David was of the tribe of Judah. By him was the kingdom of Israel raised to a pitch of power and glory which made his name great in distant lands. Putting the hand in the neck is obviously a figurative expression, importing conquest, or forcing the enemy to turn from their victors and quit the field. It is a very significant metaphor. The idea conveyed by it is that of a person turning to flee, and his pursuer putting his hand upon the back of his neck or his shoulders to arrest his flight and secure him; thus at once showing his own superiority and the weakness of his enemy. The enemies of Judah were more especially overthrown and brought into complete subjection under David, who, evidently referring to this prophecy, says Ps. 18. 40, 'Thou hast also *given me the neck of mine enemies*, that I might destroy them that hate me.'—¶ *Thy father's children shall*

*bow down before thee.* That is, they shall acknowledge thee as exalted to the highest dignity among them, and entertain towards thee the most profound reverence. This was the supremacy which for the present pertained to Joseph, but eventually the permanent pre-eminence was to redound to Judah; and this prediction began to be accomplished when he took precedence of the other tribes in leading the armies of Israel, after the death of Joshua, Judg. 1. 1. It was also still more fully confirmed at a subsequent period, 1 Chron. 5. 2, 'For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler.' But its complete accomplishment was to be realised only in Christ, in that transcendent dignity with which he is invested as King of kings and Lord of lords. Its ultimate spiritual fulfilment is to be seen symbolically represented in Rev. 5. 5—8, where, when the Lion of the tribe of Judah takes the sealed book, the whole host of heavenly worshippers are discovered in prostrate adorations at his feet.

9. *Judah is a lion's whelp*, &c. As the lion is the king of beasts, so this animal forms a very suitable emblem by which to represent the king among the tribes; and it is to this passage that we are to trace the denomination, 'Lion of the tribe of Judah,' so emphatically applied to Christ. The Heb. has several distinct words to designate the different species, or rather the different ages and degrees of strength and fierceness of the lion, three of which occur in this verse, denoting the different grades in the principality of Judah. He is first compared to the *גִּרְיָ* *gur*

*the little lion or the lion's whelp*, implying that his predicted dominion should, in its commencement, be small, being exercised by petty rulers, such as the judges Othniel, Ibzan, and others, who succeeded Joshua; a state of the administration of Israel that continued with occasional changes to the time of David and Solomon, when their enemies were all subdued, and the people, enriched by their spoils, were dwelling in quiet and enjoying unexampled prosperity in the land of their fathers. This triumphant and peaceful state is shadowed out by the אריה *aryeh*, *the full grown lion*, in the vigor of his strength, more strictly applicable to David, and of the לביא *labi*, *the old lioness*, an emblem of Solomon, couchant in her den after being satiated with prey, and giving herself to that repose which no one could disturb without awakening her most tremendous rage. In allusion to this the prophet in addressing Jerusalem says, Is. 29. 1, 'Wo to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.' 'Ariel' signifies 'lion of God,' and this figurative appellation is bestowed upon that city from its being the residence of David, the place 'where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid; where the lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin,' Nah. 2. 10, 11. In this metaphorical picture, the infancy, youth, and maturity of the tribe of Judah are characterised with precision and perspicuity, under figurative representations, in a most remarkable manner. From the first it should be powerful; but this initial, rather than positive power, should only afford promise of what it would be; like a lion's whelp, that only gives indications of those formidable qualities with which it shall eventually be endowed. It should afterward become a community

composed of brave and enterprising members, the terror of its enemies; like a full-grown lion, which all other animals hold in fear on account of its known might and indomitable spirit. And finally as a lioness accompanied by her young becomes to the last degree fierce and intractable, it should be dreaded by all the surrounding nations. Hence it is supposed by Hales and others that a lion was the standard of Judah.—¶ *From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.* In allusion, says Bochart, to lions which having secured their prey in the plains, return satiated to their lairs in the mountains. Throughout the whole of the present chapter the patriarch utters himself under the strong impulse of the spirit of prophecy, but the blessing of Judah seems conceived in a higher strain than any of the others, probably from the fact of the Messiah's being its grand burden. The interpreter therefore finds it difficult to confine the application of these prophetic symbols merely to the temporal achievements and victories of the tribe of Judah in the persons of its heroes and kings. The theme swells under his contemplation, and he is insensibly led by the language now cited to trace the spiritual career of 'David's greater son,' while he warred successfully with the powers of darkness during his ministry on earth, despoiling his most potent adversaries, and dividing the spoil with the mighty, till, rising from the dead, he at length 'went up' in a triumphant ascension from the field where his victories had been won, like the lion returning to his lair gorged with prey, and sat down at his father's right hand, in a rest which no enemy can presume to invade but at his utmost peril. Accordingly it will be remarked that Christ is not called the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah,' until after his ascension to heaven. This passage is thus paraphrased in

10 \* The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor † a lawgiver ‡ from between his feet, § until

x Numb. 24. 17. Jer. 30. 21. Zech. 10. 11. y Ps. 60. 7. & 108. 8. or, Numb. 21. 18. z Deut. 28. 57. a Isai. 11. 1. & 62. 11. Ezek. 21. 27. Dan. 9. 25. Matt. 21. 9. Luke 1. 32, 33.

the Chal. of Onkelos; 'He shall have dominion in the beginning, and in the end the kingdom of the house of Judah shall be magnified: for from the judgment of death thou hast rid thy soul, O my son: (referring perhaps to the resurrection of Christ:) he shall rest and dwell in strength as a lion, and as a courageous lioness, and there shall be no kingdom that shall stir him.' Compare the prediction of Balaam, Num. 23. 24, 'Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift himself up as a young lion: he shall not lie down till he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain.'

10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, &c.* Heb. לֹא יִכָּרֵר שֵׁבֶט *lo ya-sur shebet*. Gr. 'A prince shall not fail from Judah, nor a captain out of his loins, until the things come that are laid up for him.' Chal. 'One having principality shall not be taken from the house of Judah, nor a scribe from his children's children, until the Messiah come, whose the kingdom is.' Jerus. Targ. 'Kings shall not fail from the house of Judah, nor skilful doctors of the law from their children's children, till the time when the king Messiah shall come.' Syr. 'The sceptre shall not fail from Judah, nor an expounder from between his feet.' Sam. 'The sceptre shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a leader from his banners, until the Pacific shall come.' Arab. 'The rod shall not pass away from Judah, nor a lawgiver from under his rule, until he shall come whose he is.' The Heb. word for *sceptre* שֵׁבֶט *shebet*

Shiloh come: <sup>b</sup> and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

b Isai. 2. 2. & 11. 10. & 42. 1, 4. & 49. 6, 7, 22, 23. & 55. 4, 5. & 60. 1, 3, 4, 5. Hag. 2. 7. Luke 2. 30, 31, 32.

is used with such latitude, by the sacred writers, as to render its import here somewhat doubtful; though it will be perceived that the ancient versions, as now cited, are very unanimous in affixing to it the sense of *authority, jurisdiction, rule*. It signifies primarily a *rod* or *staff*. Thus Ex. 21. 20; 'If a man smite his servant or his maid with a *rod* (שֵׁבֶט).' Prov. 23. 13, 'If thou beatest him (thy son) with the *rod* (שֵׁבֶט) he shall not die.' Is. 28. 27, 'But the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a *rod*, (שֵׁבֶט).' In Lev. 27. 32, 'Whatsoever passeth under the rod'—it is spoken of the long rod, or staff, which the herdsman or shepherd carried in his hand, for the purpose of keeping his flock in order; and when covered with paint, for marking every tenth. As some kind of rod or wand was anciently borne by magistrates as a badge of authority, the word, at length, by a usual figure of speech, came to be employed as indicative of *official power* or *authority*. Thus Amos 1. 5, 'I will cut off him that holdeth the *sceptre* (שֵׁבֶט) from the house of Eden;' i. e. him that exercises jurisdiction; v. 8, 'and him that holdeth the *sceptre* from Ashkelon.' Ps. 45. 6, 'The *sceptre* (שֵׁבֶט) of thy kingdom is a right *sceptre*.' Hence, by a natural transition, it was applied to the *officers themselves*, who were distinguished by this mark of distinction. Thus, 1 Chron. 17. 6, 'Spake I word to any of the *judges* of Israel saying,' &c. This is rendered in the parallel passage, 2 Sam. 7. 7, 'Spake I

a word with any of the *tribes* of Israel (שבטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *shibte Yisrael*) saying,' &c. This leads us to notice a third import of the term, more usual perhaps than any other viz. that of 'tribe,' usually rendered in the Gr. σκηπτρον *sceptre*, or φυλή *tribe*. Thus Num. 18. 2, 'Thy brethren also of the tribe מַטֵּה *matteh* of Levi, of the *tribe* (שבטֵי) of thy father.' Exod. 24. 4, 'And (Moses) builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve *tribes* (שבטֵי) of Israel.' Judg. 20. 12, 'And the *tribes* (שבטֵי) of Israel sent men through all the *tribe* (שבטֵי) of Benjamin.' The grounds of this application of the term are perhaps to be traced to the circumstance mentioned, Num. 17. 2, 3, &c., 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a *rod*, according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve *rods*: write thou every man's name upon his *rod*.' These *rods*, corresponding in number with the number of the *tribes*, were laid up by Moses in the tabernacle, when it was discovered in the morning that Aaron's *rod* had budded. From this incident, it is not unlikely that the 'tribes' were called from the Heb. word for 'rods.' And this we consider as, on the whole, the leading, though not the exclusive sense of the term in the passage before us, which we take to be equivalent to *tribeship*, implying that the tribe of Judah, as a *tribe*, should continue, and continue in the exercise of its wonted *tribal authority* till the coming of the Messiah, however the other ten tribes might be scattered by conquest or captivity. In this sense every tribe had a *sceptre*, and this promise to Judah that his *sceptre should not depart*, amounts to a declaration that the *sceptres* of the other tribes *should depart*. All the other tribes were to *have* a *sceptre* as

well as Judah, but Judah's *sceptre* should continue longer with him than his brothers' *sceptres* should with them. Accordingly we learn from history that Judah *never lost his tribe*, the greatest care having been exercised to preserve distinct this tribe and its families. Thus, in the days of Saul the men of Judah were numbered *apart*, 1 Sam. 11. 8; the same also was the case in the time of David, 2 Sam. 24. 9. Prophets also were employed to record the genealogies of this tribe under the kings, 2 Chron. 12. 15, and 13. 22, and the same care appears to have been exercised during the captivity in Babylon, for while there was difficulty in making out the genealogies of some of the other tribes there was none in regard to this, Ez. 2. 62; Neh. 7. 64. And while in fact a large portion of the other ten tribes never returned at all to the land of their fathers, Judah, with Benjamin its accessory, returned with its integrity unbroken, and so remained till the birth of Christ, the whole nation as well as the land itself receiving its denomination from Judah, the one being called 'Jews,' the other 'Judæa.' Thus it was that the *sceptre*, or the *tribal constitution*, did not depart from Judah before the predicted era. It is abundantly evident, however, that both the *sceptre* and what is called the *lawgiver* are long since lost in Judah; that the tribe of Judah has lost the record of its genealogies; and that none can discriminate the true descendants of the patriarch Judah from the descendants of Benjamin or of the other patriarchs. Either then this word of promise to Judah has failed forevermore, or Shiloh is come, and it is vain to look for another Messiah.—¶ *Nor a lawgiver from between his feet.* Heb. מְחֹקֵק *mehokek*, a *writer of statutes*; i. e. a scribe, an expounder or interpreter of the law, such as were the scribes under the



New Testament; not a legislator in the strict sense of the word, for the power of making laws for the people of Israel was never delegated by the Most High to any man or number of men; this he always reserved in his own hands. It is a great error to suppose that the tribe of Judah was ever invested with a legislative authority over the other tribes, or in fact over itself. It governed itself by laws already enacted. 'Lawgiver' is here a collective term for the *teachers of the law*, a body of men which we learn continued in Israel as long as the national polity of that people subsisted. This office was performed by the priests and Levites, from whom were the *lawyers* and *scribes* so often mentioned in the Evangelists, and it is worthy of note that they are particularly mentioned as adhering to the house of Judah and being associated with it. Thus, 2 Chron. 11. 13, 14, 'And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possessions, and came to Judah and Jerusalem.' The kings of Judah moreover took especial care that the priests and Levites should be distributed as instructors of the people throughout the several cities of the kingdom. 2 Chron. 17. 9, 'And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.' This order of men continued during the period of the captivity, Ez. 2. 36, 40; Neh. 8. 9, and ch. 12, and down to the date of the Saviour's manifestation, as is evident from almost every page of the Gospels. The original term is rendered by the Gr. 'president;' by the Chal. 'scribe;' by the Jerus. Targ. 'skillful doctors of the law;' by the Targ. Jon. 'teaching scribes.'—¶ *From between his feet.*

This has sometimes been interpreted as a paraphrastic phrase for 'being born of;' or as synonymous with 'out of the loins,' 'out of the thighs.' See Deut. 28. 57. But as the *law-teachers* here spoken of sprung not from the tribe of Judah, but from that of Levi, this explication does not appear tenable. We therefore understand the phrase as importing merely that this class of men should occupy a station *subordinate* to that of the personified authority of the tribe. The allusion is perhaps to the fact of princes, judges, and other dignitaries having a *scribe* or *secretary* sitting at their feet, or in a place below the level which they occupy themselves. To be 'at the feet' of a person, is a scriptural expression for being subservient to him, or obsequious to his will. Thus, Ex. 11. 8, 'Get thee out, and all the people *that follow thee*;' Heb. 'that are *at thy feet*.' This Aben Ezra interprets as meaning 'which are in thy power, or at thy disposal. Deut. 11. 6, 'And all the substance that was in their possession;' Heb. 'at their feet;' Ab. Ez. 'which obeyed them.' Judg. 8. 5, 'Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people *that follow me*;' Heb. 'that are *at my feet*.' The following passage may be adduced, as at once an illustration and a fulfilment of the meaning of the phrase; 2 Chron. 34. 30, 'And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and the priests and the Levites*, great and small: and he read (i. e. caused the priests and the Levites to read) in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.' Here the 'lawgiver' may be conceived as sitting 'at the feet' of the supreme authority, and acting in his appropriate capacity of public teacher.—¶ *Until the Shiloh come.* As this is admitted by all believers in revelation as a clear pre-

diction of the Messiah, by which word it is in fact rendered by the chief of the ancient Targumists, we shall waive the recital of the various opinions respecting the origin and literal import of the title 'Shiloh,' and give that only which appears to rest on the best authority. This is, that it is derived from שָׁלוֹחַ *shalah*, to be quiet, easy, secure, and in Hiph. to make quiet, to pacify; in which case 'Shiloh' signifies the *Tranquillizer, the Pacificator, the Giver of peace*, a title pre-eminently applicable to Him by whom the proclamation of 'peace on earth and good will to men' is made, and the end of whose mission into the world was that he might restore 'peace' between the offended Majesty of heaven and a race of creatures who had incurred the guilt of rebels.—¶ *Unto him shall the gathering of the nations be.* Heb. יִקְקֶהָת *yikkehath*, obedience, adherence, or obsequiousness. Gr. 'And he shall be the expectation of the nations, or the Gentiles.' Chal. 'And him shall the people obey.' Syr. 'And him shall peoples wait for.' Sam. and Arab. 'And to him shall the people be congregated.' This prediction is alluded to by Isaiah 11. 10, whose words are thus quoted by Paul, Rom. 15. 12, 'And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' We now see the excellency of the blessing given to Judah. He was to be the father of the Shiloh; and till the Shiloh came, this tribe was to be the most glorious of all the tribes of Israel. The great burden of Judah's blessing was the promise of the Messiah. It was expected that he would bring with him the richest blessings to men, and in particular to his own people. It was the joy of the ancient patriarchs that the Shiloh was to proceed from them. It was their joy that a large part of their natural

seed should be blessed in him; but it was the *completion* of their joy that to him the gathering or the obedience of the nations should be. Abraham and his seed were the heirs of the world, and they were then put in possession of their inheritance, when the Gentiles were made to rejoice with his people in the supremacy of the same Lord, whose dominion was to extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Do we think Judah a happy man when he heard his father's prophetic blessing? Do we think the tribe of Judah happy because they were heirs of the blessing? But are not we also happy, when the blessing of Jacob and Abraham comes upon us through Jesus Christ? Have we yielded the obedience of faith to the great Redeemer? He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but to as many as receive him, whether Jews or Gentiles, he gives power to become the sons of God. The whole blessing of Judah had a favorable aspect toward us, when it was predicted that this tribe should be preserved and blessed with distinguishing honors till the Shiloh came. The Lord had in view not only the honor and advantage of his highly favored people of Israel, and of the tribe of Judah in particular, but the salvation of the Gentiles, who were to be gathered in to Shiloh. For our sakes Israel and Judah enjoyed the divine protection till Christ came that we might be saved by his obedience to the death. The whole train of providential administration in the world, and especially towards the chosen people was directed towards the redemption and salvation of men as its object. What despisers then are we of our own mercies? If we refuse to join the concourse that is flocking to the standard of the Shiloh?

11. *Binding his foal unto the vine, &c.* It has been generally supposed

11 \* Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the

c 2 Kings 3. 32.

that the spirit of inspiration here makes sudden transition from the *spiritual* to the *temporal* prerogatives of Judah, and that this part of the prophecy is to be interpreted of the exceeding fertility of his inheritance in the land of Canaan, particularly in the production of the vine. So luxuriant should be the growth of vines in his allotment, that it should not be unusual for men to bind their young asses to them as they do in other countries to any kind of barren timber, nor would they heed their eating their tender shoots and leaves, any more than if they were grass. And not only so; wine was to be produced in such rich abundance, that the people might 'wash their garments in wine and their clothes in the blood of grapes,' as if it had been so much water. Of course the language is to be understood as a hyperbolical expression for the most teeming fecundity of soil. In support of this exposition, reference is had to the mammoth cluster of grapes which grew at Eschol, in the tract assigned to Judah, which was carried back 'on a staff between two' as a specimen of the growth of the country, Num. 13. 23. We do not feel prepared absolutely to reject this interpretation, and yet we cannot refrain from suggesting, (1) That it has somewhat the air of an unnatural transition to pass so abruptly from the lofty spiritual theme of the Messiah in the preceding verse to so petty a subject as the natural qualities of the soil which Judah was to inherit in Canaan. It would seem that such a descent could not be made without doing violence to the spirit of prophecy. (2) A more formidable objection arises from the fact that the grammatical

choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

structure of the passage requires that the participle 'binding' should be referred to the nearest antecedent substantive, which is not 'Judah,' but 'Shiloh.' Let this be understood as the true construction and the whole flows naturally as a continuous description of the attributes of the main subject of the oracle. Viewing Christ then as the grand burden of the prediction, is it the excess of *spiritualizing* interpretation if, with Calovius, we regard this high-wrought language as implying that he should 'bind,' by the cords of faith, hope, and charity, to the 'vine' of the Jewish church, that 'vine which was brought out of Egypt,' the people of the Gentiles, here shadowed forth under the image of an ass's colt, who had hitherto never been brought into subjection to the divine law, even as the young ass upon which our Lord rode into Jerusalem, and to which some have thought, not improbably, that here was a prophetic allusion, had never before been subjected to a rider? By some of the Jewish writers it is taken as an intimation of the lowliness of the Messiah's advent. Thus, in the treatise entitled '*Bereshith Rabba*,' speaking of this passage it is said, 'It sheweth us that when Christ shall come to save Israel, he shall make ready his ass, and ride upon him, and come unto Israel with poverty.' We give the above interpretation, not as actually adopting it, but as one that harmonises somewhat happily with the general highly sublimated and mystical strain of the patriarchal predictions in the rest of the chapter.—¶ *He washed his garments in wine, &c.* If the preceding clause be explained in the sense suggested, this we are naturally required

12 His <sup>d</sup> eyes *shall be* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

d Prov. 23. 29.

to refer to the glorious career of the Savior's victories, so that the two members of the verse present, contrasted in strong relief, his state of humiliation with that of his subsequent exaltation, when he had successfully avenged himself of his adversaries. His garments therefore are in fact washed in blood of a deeper stain than that of the grape, as we may learn from the passages by which this is to be illustrated. Is. 63. 1—3, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.' See to the same effect Rev. 14. 20, and 19. 13. Jerus. Targ. 'How beautiful is the King Christ that shall spring up of the house of Judah. He shall gird his loins, and shall go forth to war against his enemies. He shall kill kings and princes, making the rivers red with the blood of their slain, and the hills white with the fat of their mighty men: his garments shall be imbrued in blood, and he like to one pressing clusters of grapes.'

12. His eyes *shall be* red with wine, &c. Or, Heb. 'His eyes shall be redder than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.' This is the rendering of

13 ¶ \* Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.

e Deut. 33. 18, 19. Josh. 19. 10, 11.

the Gr., Arab., Syr., Sam., and Vulg. But if taken according to the common version, the more obvious sense undoubtedly is, as hinted above, that the descendants of Judah should inherit so fruitful a country as to enable them to drink wine and milk in such quantities, that their eyes should assume the sparkling ruby tint of the one, and their teeth the immaculate whiteness of the other. But would it have been a blessing to Judah to have his eyes in the literal sense of the expression 'red with wine?' Very far from it; but it was a blessing to him to have a land so rich, that he might drink wine in as great abundance as the laws of temperance would admit. When it is said that he should wash his garments in wine, it certainly is not meant that he would actually make use of wine instead of water to wash his clothes. This would have been a grievous abuse of a product of divine bounty which might have been turned to a better account. But would it not have been a still more grievous abuse of it to make a means of destroying our own understandings, and deforming the native expression of our faces?—for the word here used to denote 'redness' is used in Prov. 23. 29, (and no where else in the Scriptures,) as a description of the detestable effects of drunkenness. The language of Jacob, therefore, is doubtless to be understood merely as hyperbolic or oratorical.

13. Zebulun *shall dwell at the haven of the sea*, &c. Heb. לְחֹרֶף יָמִים *lehoph yammim* יִשְׁכֹּן *yishkon*, *shall dwell in tents*, or *shall tabernacle at the shore of the sea*. Jacob does not pro-

nounce the blessings upon his sons in the order of their birth, as in that case Zebulun would hold the tenth place instead of the fifth, which belonged to Issachar; but he classes the sons of Leah together, and then passes to those of the concubines. Moses, Deut. 33. 18, and Joshua, Josh. 19. 10—17, observe the same order in regard to these two brethren. Another reason perhaps of Zebulun's being named before Issachar is the fact that the district of this tribe lay north of that of Issachar. As Zebulun received his name from the 'habitation' or 'cohabitation' of which he was the cause in respect to his parents, so here the blessing begins with an allusion to his 'dwelling.' The word rendered 'haven' occurs elsewhere five times, in each of which instances it is rendered either 'sea-shore,' or 'sea-coast,' and properly implies 'a maritime region' rather than a 'haven,' or 'port.' This is to be inferred also from the use of the term יִשְׁכֹּן *yishkon*, *he shall tabernacle*, as dwelling in tents is not a mode of habitation adapted to a sea-port, but to the interior of a country; although it is unquestionable that a portion of the tribe occupied the havens upon the coast, and addicted themselves to sea-faring pursuits. This prophetic designation, uttered two hundred and fifty years before the event took place, corresponds with remarkable exactness with the geographical character of the lot of Zebulun in Canaan. It extended from the vicinity of the Mediterranean sea on the west to the lake of Genesaret on the east, and lay therefore very commodiously for the purposes of trade and navigation. Gr. 'Zebulun shall be a maritime dweller.' Moses, accordingly, in the parallel blessing, Deut 33. 18, adopts a kindred language; 'And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out; . e. in thy voyages, in thy trading ex-

peditions. Nothing but the inspiration of the speaker can account for this clear and accurate designation of the country which Zebulun was to occupy in Canaan. Jacob says concerning the inheritance of this tribe what would not have been true had it been said of any other of the inheritances of the twelve tribes, except Asher, and yet was strictly true concerning them, that they should dwell at the haven of the sea, and enjoy the advantages of commodious harbors in the neighborhood of the ancient city of Zidon. How could Moses too, when he committed this prophecy to writing, have known that it would be verified? In no other way but by his faith in the word of God. There could be no artifice used to effect an agreement between the lots used in the division of the land, and the prophecies of Jacob or Moses. But the whole disposing of the lot is of the Lord.—¶ *His border shall be unto Zidon.* Heb. רִכְּתוֹ עַל צִידֹן *yarkatho al Tzidon*, *his side shall be towards or over against, Zidon.* It did not extend to it. From the account of the inheritances of the tribes, Josh. 19, it appears that Asher bordered on great Zidon, and that the tribe of Zebulun was separated by Asher from that noted city; yet we have no reason to doubt that the blessing of Zebulun was more distinctive of that tribe than it could have been of that of Asher, which probably did not avail itself so much of its maritime situation or of the neighborhood of Zidon. Those who lived in the days of the judges and kings of Israel, knew better than we do, how exactly the ancient predictions concerning the natural seed of Abraham were accomplished. But we know enough of their accomplishment, to fill us with wonder and praise; and to banish all doubts concerning the divine original of the word of prophecy. It may here be remarked that

14 ¶ Issachar *is* a strong ass, couching down between two burdens:

15 And he saw that rest *was* good, and the land that *it was*

pleasant; and bowed <sup>f</sup>his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

f 1 Sam. 10. 9

Zebulun bordered not only on the great sea, which we call the Mediterranean, but on another sea frequently spoken of in the gospel, the sea of Tiberias, where our Lord found several of the men whom he called to the glorious office of apostleship. It is probable that some of the apostles were sons of Zebulun.

14. *Issachar is a strong ass, &c.* Heb. חמור גרם *hamor garem, strong-boned ass*, or lit. *an ass of bone*. Issachar being principally engaged in husbandry, is fitly compared to a strong ass, a patient drudging animal, capable of enduring the severest labor without suffering any diminution of strength or hardihood; as Judah had been compared to a lion, to denote the courage and resolution of that tribe. Asses were not so contemptible animals in the eyes of the Jews as they are amongst us. We are not therefore to suppose that Issachar was vilified by this comparison, any more than Dan was by being called a serpent, or Benjamin by being likened to a wolf. The peculiar habits of the ass are familiar to all; the drift therefore of the comparison can be mistaken by none. The qualities of this animal are patience, gentleness, great capability of endurance, laborious exertion, and a meek submission to authority. Issachar therefore the progenitor of a race singularly docile, and distinguished for their patient industry, is exhibited under the similitude of the meekest and most laborious of quadrupeds. — ¶ *Couching down between two burdens.* Heb. רבץ בין המשפתים *robetz bain hamishpetaim*. The original word

rendered *burdens* is probably to be referred to the root שפה *to stick up, to be prominent*; hence the substantive משפה may signify any kind of *prominence*. The two panniers of the laden ass form *prominences*, sticking up on each side above the back of the animal when lying down, which is the posture here described. This expression, as applied to a region of country, would naturally be supposed to imply two very marked and conspicuous limits, as for instance two ranges of mountains inclosing a valley, and by a very remarkable coincidence the tribe of Issachar received for its lot, in the distribution of the land, the fertile and delightful vale of Esdraelon, lying between ranges of hills, in the peaceful and industrious occupancy of which they might very justly be likened to an ass reposing between his protuberant panniers. 'Here, on this plain,' says Dr. Clarke, 'the most fertile part of all the land of Canaan, which, though a solitude, we found like one vast meadow covered with the richest pasture, the tribe of Issachar rejoiced in their tents.' As the blessings of several of the other sons have respect to the geographical features of their destined inheritance, it is natural to look for something of the same kind in that of Issachar, and viewed in this light the words yield a clear and striking sense, the appropriateness of which to the matter of fact is obvious to every eye. Chal. 'Issachar rich in substance, and his possession shall be between the bounds.' Syr. 'Issachar a gigantic man, lying down between the paths.' Targ. Jon. 'He shall lie down between

16 ¶ **Dan shall judge his people,** as one of the tribes of Israel.

17 <sup>h</sup> **Dan shall be a serpent by**

g Deut. 33, 22. Judg. 18, 1, 2. h Judg. 18, 27.

the limits of his brethren.' Jerus. Targ. 'And his boundary shall be situated between two limits.'

15. *And he saw that rest was good, &c.* That is, he saw that his *place of rest* was good; that a singularly eligible tract had fallen to his lot. It is by no means clear that Jacob intended a censure on the posterity of Issachar, though many commentators understand it to the disparagement of this tribe, as if they were to be addicted to ignominious ease. The Gr. renders the passage, 'Having seen the rest that it was excellent, and the land that it was fat, he subjected his shoulder to labor, and became an husbandman.' Surrounded by the other tribes, and seeing his portion of the good land that it was very fertile, he devoted himself to the labors of husbandry. Accordingly Josephus says of Issachar's inheritance, 'It is fruitful to admiration, abounding in pastures and nurseries of all kinds, so that it would make any man in love with husbandry.'—

¶ *Became a servant unto tribute.* Heb. יְחִי לַמַּס עֶבֶד *yehi lemas obed, became to the drudgery of a servant*; i. e. submitted to the drudgery of a servant; a farther illustration of his habits of assiduous toil. It does not imply the payment of tribute-money, but the yielding up of the body to hard service. The leading idea undoubtedly is that the tribe of Issachar was to be distinguished, not for commercial pursuits or warlike prowess, but for patient devotedness to the culture of the soil. Some indeed have supposed that the patriarch meant to insinuate that they should be willing to purchase exemp-

the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

tion from war by a heavy tribute; but the words do not necessarily imply it, nor does it appear that they ever declined the military services to which they were called. They are commended by Deborah for the prompt presentation of themselves in the war with Jabin, Judg. 5. 15, and in the days of David an honorable testimonial is given to their character, 1 Chron. 12. 32.

16. *Dan shall judge his people.* Heb. דָּן יִרְדֵּן *Dan yadin, the judger shall judge*; an instance of the paranomasia, or play upon verbal affinities. The prediction points to a leading characteristic in the tribe of Dan, to wit, that of 'judging,' or acting the part of a deliverer, in the person of some eminent individual, a descendant of this tribe. This, it cannot be doubted, was fulfilled mainly in Samson, the most illustrious son of the tribe of Dan, who Judg. 15. 20, '*judged Israel twenty years.*' Chal. 'In the tribe of Dan there shall be chosen and raised up a man, and in his days his people shall be delivered.'—

¶ *As one of the tribes of Israel.* This clause affords grammatically a choice of interpretations; either that Dan should judge his people as one of the other tribes should judge them, al-luding perhaps tacitly to Judah, who was usually to hold the pre-eminence; or, that he should, at some time or other, judge the whole people of Israel as though they constituted but one tribe. The latter, we apprehend to be the true sense, as it is expressly affirmed that Samson '*judged Israel*'—not the tribe of Dan—'twenty years.' Thus the Yarg. Jon. 'And it shall come to pass that from the house of

18 <sup>1</sup> I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!

i Ps. 25, 6. & 119, 166, 174. Isai. 25, 9.

Dan a man shall arise who shall judge his people with the judgments of truth; and at the same time all the tribes of Israel shall obey him.' Most of the other ancient versions, however, put the former construction upon the words.

17. *Dan shall be a serpent by the way, &c.* The obvious import of this is, that although Dan in the person of his future representative should be renowned as a warrior, yet he should not accomplish his victories so much by open bravery and the direct force of arms as by subtlety and stratagem, surprising the enemy by unexpected assaults, as a serpent concealed by the way-side suddenly darts upon the unwary traveller. We have only to consult the history of Samson's warfare with the Philistines to see how strikingly this predicted character was then realized. The original word for *adder* (שִׁפְיֹן *shephiphon*) Bochart shows satisfactorily to signify the *Cerastes*, or *arrow snake*, (*serpens jaculus*), a serpent of the viper kind, which, lurking in the sand and wheel-tracks in the road, unexpectedly bites not only the traveller but the beast on which he rides; thus described by an ancient poet:

—'Straight onward spires he glides,  
And bites the horse's leg, or cattle's sides.'

— <sup>1</sup> *That biteth the horse's heels*; i. e. that overthroweth the house-pillars; a singularly beautiful and striking symbol of the transaction recorded Judges 16. 27—30, 'Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women. And Samson

19 <sup>1</sup> <sup>k</sup> Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

k Deut. 33. 20. 1 Chron. 5. 18.

took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood. . . . And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So that the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.' Chal. 'There shall be a man who shall be chosen and rise from the house of Dan, whose fear shall come upon the people, and he shall valiantly smite the Philistines, as a serpent, as an adder he shall lie in wait by the path, he shall slay the mighty men in the camp of the Philistines, horsemen and footmen, and shall weaken their horses and chariots, and cast down their riders backward;' Jerus. Targ. 'And he shall be like a serpent who lies in the path, and like a basilisk who watches in the division of the roads, and he shall smite the horse in his heel, so that his rider shall think to turn backward; this shall be Samson the son of Manoah, whose fear shall be upon his enemies, and his dread upon his haters, for he shall slay kings with princes.'

18. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* What are we to understand by this salvation? Or why does Jacob express his longings after God's salvation at this time, when he had blessed only a part of his sons, and was about to bless the rest of them? It seems to be an exclamation prompted by the spirit of prophecy from a foresight of the sudden and untimely death of Samson, and the consequent evils and disasters which would thence ensue, (see Josh. 19. 47; Judg. 1. 34, with Jrdg. 18. 30, and 1 Kings 12. 29,) not-



withstanding which Jacob is inwardly constrained on this occasion to declare his firm belief and his earnest expectation of that eternal deliverance which was to be wrought by the Messiah. Accordingly the Chal. paraphrases the passage thus; 'I expect thy salvation, O Lord, said our father Jacob. I look not for the salvation of Gideon, because it is a temporal salvation, nor for the salvation of Samson, the son of Manoah, because it is transitory; but I look for the redemption of Christ, the son of David, who is to come to call to himself the children, whose salvation my soul desireth.' This sudden ejaculation, abruptly introduced as it is, serves no doubt to point out to us the predominant state of Jacob's mind. It shows that his heart was set on the promised salvation. It had been the object of his most delightful contemplations, and his most ardent desires through the course of his life. It was all his desire, and all his joy in his last hours. His thoughts turned to it as the thoughts of a miser are ever turning to his treasure. We have indeed to wait for this salvation, but not in the same sense as did the pious progenitor of Israel. The Savior for whom the ancient patriarchs waited and longed, has long since come into our world and obtained eternal redemption for us. Still, however, we must wait for the son of God from heaven, who is our deliverer from the wrath to come. Whilst we live, and when we die, let us wait for him, and our hope will not be in vain. 'It is a good thing that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.'

19. *Gad, a troop shall overcome him.*

Heb. גַּד גִּדּוּד יִגְבְּדֵנּוּ *Gad gedud yegdenu*, the troop, a troop shall-with-troop-overcome him; a possible allusion to the name given to Gad at his birth, Gen. 30. 11. The drift of the oracle is to preintimate the fact, abundantly

verified by the history, that this tribe should be annoyed, wasted, and sometimes brought into subjection by the predatory bands of Ammonites, Philistines, Hagarenes, and other hostile powers bordering upon their territories. Judg. 10. 8, 'And that year they (the Philistines and Ammonites) vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children that were on the other side of Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.' Jer. 49. 1, 'Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in their cities?' Sam. 'Gad, a troop shall waste him, and he shall waste at last.' Arab. 'Gad shall break the rear of whatsoever army shall be gathered against him.'—¶ *But he shall overcome at the last.* These words do not mean that the Gadites were to be exempted from the general calamity when God should cast Israel out of his sight, but that they were to be often delivered from their enemies, and blessed with victory in the conclusion of wars in which at the beginning they were beaten by their enemies. The following passage from the subsequent history illustrates in part the prediction. 1 Chron. 5. 18—22, 'The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh . . . . . made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephesh, and Nodab. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them; for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him. . . . . For there fell down many slain because the war was of God.' That this tribe were of a warlike character is evinced by the language of the historian, 1 Chron. 12. 8, 'And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the

20 ¶ <sup>1</sup> Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

1 Deut. 33. 24. Josh. 19. 24.

hold to the wilderness men of might and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as roes upon the mountains.' This throws light upon the parallel benediction of Moses, Deut. 33. 20, 'Blessed is he that enlargeth Gad; he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.'

20. *Out of Asher his bread shall be fat.* It might have been said of Asher, as well as of Zebulun, that he should dwell at the haven of the sea, and his border should reach to Zidon, Josh. 19. 23, 29. But it is probable that he did not avail himself of his maritime position so much as Zebulun. The extraordinary fertility of his soil might render him less heedful of the advantages of his situation for trade. The name 'Asher' has the import of 'felicity, bliss, prosperity' in reference to which the Jerus. Targ. and that of Jon. render it: 'O happy Asher, how fat is thy land! and his land shall supply the delicacies of the kings of the sons of Israel!' The obvious import of the language is, that Asher's inheritance should be such as to evince that the name given him was well founded. For he should not only enjoy the rich products of a fertile land, teeming with every thing that could contribute not only to the sustenance, but to the comfort of life, but should be able also, from his ample stores, to supply those luxurious articles which are sought to grace the tables of kings. The Heb. word for *fat* (שֶׁמֶן *shemanah*) is closely related to שמן *shemen*, oil, and therefore, in the corresponding blessing uttered by Moses, Deut 33. 24, it is said, 'He shall dip his foot in oil.'

35

21 ¶ <sup>m</sup> Naphtali is an hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

m Deut. 33. 23.

'Bread,' as before remarked, is used for all kinds of food, and 'fat' for the best or most excellent of any thing. The silence of the Scriptures elsewhere in relation to the region occupied by Asher, prevents us from confirming this prediction in detail, as we have been enabled to do most of the others. We therefore merely give the Chal. paraphrase of this verse: 'The land of Asher shall be the best, and he shall be nourished with the dainties of kings.' Consequently he would be able to afford such dainties to kings.

21. *Naphtali is a hind let loose.* A 'hind' is the mate or female of the stag; an animal of an elegant shape, and noted for the nimbleness with which it leaps among the mountain rocks, and the swiftness of its course on the level plain; in allusion to which the Psalmist says, Ps. 18. 33, 'The Lord maketh my feet like hind's feet, and causeth me to stand upon the high places.' Its timid and shrinking nature renders it an unapt emblem of warlike qualities; and except in one eminent instance it does not appear that the tribe of Naphtali, of which it is here the representative, was ever distinguished by any heroic achievements; and even on that occasion, Judg. 4. 6—16, Barak, who is principally aimed at in the prediction, betrayed at first the timorousness of the deer, and needed the masculine promptings of Deborah to rouse him to action. Judg. 4. 8, 'And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.' When once embarked in the cause, however, he evinced a noble intrepidity, and the alacrity with which he, with his ten

22 ¶ Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
even a fruitful bough by a well,

whose branches run over the  
wall:

thousand men 'at his feet,' descended from Mount Tabor, like a deer leaping down the declivities, and met and discomfited the hosts of Sisera, extorted from Deborah the warmest commendations. They were then 'a people that jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.' The original for 'let loose' is properly 'sent forth,' implying rather the dispatching of a messenger than the freeing of a prisoner. The propriety of the expression may be seen from the following incident in the history; Judg. 4. 6, 'And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kadesh-Naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun.' This was his mission.—¶ *He giveth goodly words.* Heb. שֹׁפֵר אִמְרֵי imre shapher, *he giveth sayings of fairness, elegance, or grace.* The allusion we suppose to be to the splendid triumphal song which was sung by Deborah and Barak conjointly in celebration of the victory obtained over Jabin and Sisera, a poem which ranks high among the finest specimens of lyrical composition to be found in any language. Judg. 5, 'Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel,' &c. Jerus. Targ. 'And when he opened his mouth in the congregation of Israel, his tongue was sweet as honey.' The parallel blessing of Moses, Deut. 33. 23, is in different phraseology: 'O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord!'

22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, &c.

Heb. בֶּן פֹּרֶת *ben porath*, son of a fruitful (vine), or a son of fructifying. As Jacob alludes to the names of Judah, Dan, and Gad, in the blessings which he pronounces upon them, so the readers of the Heb. text will perceive an allusion to the name of Ephraim in the blessing pronounced upon Joseph, פֹּרֶת *porath* and אֶפְרַיִם *Ephraim* coming from the common root פָּרָה *parah*, to be fruitful. Chal. 'A growing son is Joseph, a son who shall be blessed as a vine that is planted by a fountain of waters.' Gr. 'A son increased.' A similar expression, significant of fecundity, occurs Ps. 128. 3, 'Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.' In the Heb. idiom, whatever proceeds or emanates from any thing, is said to be its 'son,' or 'daughter.' Thus, Gen. 18. 7, 'a calf' is called 'the son of the herd;' Job 41. 28, 'arrows,' 'the sons of the bow,' or, Lam. 3. 13, 'sons of the quiver;' Job. 5. 7, 'sparks,' 'the sons of the burning coal,' &c. So in the present case, the 'son of a fruitful vine' is a 'bough' or 'branch' of the vine, which discloses the grounds of the rendering in the Eng. version. The drift of the blessing is to announce the prolific character of the seed of Joseph, the numerous issue that should proceed from his two sons.—¶ *A fruitful bough by a well.* Jerus. Targ. 'I liken Joseph, my son, to a vine planted by a well of waters, that sendeth out her roots to the deep.' By the mention of the 'well' beside which Joseph's progeny were to grow up, we are reminded of the famous 'well of Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph,' Jhn 4. 5. Sychar is

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him :

n ch. 37. 4, 24, 28. & 39. 20. & 42. 21. Ps. 118. 13.

the same as Shechem, of which Jacob says, Gen. 48. 22, 'Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.' This was the place of which the Evangelist says, 'Now Jacob's well was there;' and to this well we conceive the patriarch, or the Spirit that spake in him, alludes in the words before us, a well in the midst of his inheritance.—¶ *Whose branches run over the wall.* Heb. בְּנֵי בָנוֹת *banoth daughters.* 'The daughters (each) runneth over the wall;' the subject plural, the verb singular. By the 'daughters,' here, is meant the young and tender branches, as the stronger and more vigorous are before called 'sons.' All this falls very naturally on an eastern ear. Joseph was the fruitful bough of Jacob, and being planted near a well, his leaf would not wither, and he would bring forth his fruit in his season. Great delight is taken in all kinds of creepers, which bear edible fruits, and the natives allow them to run over the walls and roofs of their houses. The term 'branches' in the verse is in the margin rendered 'daughters;' and it is an interesting fact, and one which will throw light on some other passages, that the same term is used here to denote the same thing. 'That man has only one Chede, i. e. branch, daughter.' 'The youngest Chede (branch) has got married this day.' 'Where are your branches?' 'They are all married.' 'What a young branch to be in this state!—how soon it has given fruit!' When a mother has had a large family, 'That

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the

o Job 29. 20. Ps. 37. 15.

branch has borne plenty of fruit.' A husband will say to his wife, who is sterile, 'Of what use is a branch which bears not fruit?' The figure is much used in poetry.—*Roberts.* The symbol of the branches overtopping the wall upon which they are trained, is equivalent to the former, denoting the vast increase of the posterity of Joseph, of which the following passages furnish an account: Num. 1. 33, 35; Josh. ch. 16 and 17. Moses says of them, Deut. 33. 17, 'They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh.' Chal. 'Two tribes shall come forth of his sons, and they shall receive their portion and inheritance.' The emblem of the 'vine running over the wall' aptly denotes a population swelling beyond the compass of the bounds which they were to occupy. How strikingly this was fulfilled in the case of Joseph, may be seen from the ensuing narrative. Josh. 17. 14, 18, 'And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us. . . And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only. But the mountain shall

hands of <sup>p</sup> the mighty *God* of Jacob: (<sup>q</sup> from thence <sup>r</sup> is the shepherd <sup>s</sup> the stone of Israel):

<sup>p</sup> Ps. 132. 2, 5. <sup>q</sup> ch. 45. 11. & 47. 12. & 4. 21. <sup>r</sup> Ps. 80. 1. <sup>s</sup> Isai. 28. 16.

je thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine.' Thus that part of the birthright which consisted in the 'double portion,' still accrued to Joseph.

23, 24. *The archers have sorely grieved him.* Heb. בַּעֲלֵי הַחִצִּים *baale hitzim*, lords of arrows, or arrow-masters. See Note on Gen. 14. 13. Gr. 'Against whom they that consulted gave reproaches, and the archers laid wait for him.' Chal. 'And strong men, men of dissension, straitened him, and took revenge of him, and provoked him.' The prophecy here points to Joseph in person, from whose history its fulfilment appears evident. He was aimed and shot at, as it were, by the bitter and reviling words of his brethren, and still more deeply wounded by their cruel treatment. He was sold into Egypt through envy, and imprisoned by a lie. His virtue was violently assaulted by his mistress, his innocence wronged by his master, and his patience severely tried by the ingratitude of a fellow-prisoner. Yet 'his bow abode in strength.' The divine favor forsook him not. He was preserved and relieved by the mighty God of Jacob, by whom he was delivered when his death was designed; preserved chaste when tempted to sin; rendered prosperous from the depth of his affliction; and finally advanced to great dignity, and made an instrument of most signal good to others. Thus his 'bow abode in strength,' denoting an unconquered perseverance in a particular state or condition. Chal. 'And the prophecy was fulfilled in them, for

25 'Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, ' and by the Almighty, ' who shall

<sup>t</sup> ch. 28. 13, 21. & 35. 3. & 43. 23. <sup>u</sup> ch. 17. 1. & 35. 11. <sup>x</sup> Deut. 33. 13.

that he observed the law in secret, and set his hope constant.' —¶ *And the arms of his hands were made strong.* The idea of *strength, solidity, firmness*, which is affixed by some lexicographers to the original word for 'made strong,' (יָפֹזֵז *yaphozu*) is altogether secondary, the primitive root of the term signifying 'fine gold.' It occurs Ps. 19. 10 'More to be desired are they than gold yea 'than much *fine gold*. (Heb פָּז *paz*).' Ps. 21. 3, 'Thou settest a crown of *pure gold* (פָּז) on his head,' Prov. 8. 19, 'My fruit is better than gold, yea, than *fine gold* (פָּז).' The verb, therefore, which is of the kind called *denominative*, or formed from a noun, signifies to 'make strong' only so far as it implies the rendering a substance of the hardness and consistence of pure gold. But it is probable that the sense given of the word by some of the Jewish critics is the most correct, viz., 'to make golden,' or 'to gild,' in allusion to the ornaments of gold which were put upon the hands of Joseph by Pharaoh, Gen. 41. 42. This, though done by Pharaoh, is referred to the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, because it was brought about by his overruling providence. Chal. 'Therefore gold was put upon his arms; he strengthened and confirmed his kingdom, which was given him from before the most mighty One of Jacob.' —¶ *From thence is, &c.*; i. e. from *that time*, and *from that cause*, he became, or was made the *feeder* or *sustainer* of his brethren; a stay, a support, a *rock* of defence to his father and his family. It is a thankful recognition of Joseph's kindness to his father

bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb:

and family in *keeping* and *feeding* them, even as a *shepherd* does his sheep; by which he became the *foundation* or *basis*, as it were, of the house of Jacob, which he preserved from perishing. Accordingly, the Apocryphal writer, in Eccles. 49. 15, in his praises of Joseph, says, 'Neither was there a man born like unto Joseph, a governor of his brethren, and a *stay* of the people.' In consequence of Joseph's persevering constancy in uprightness, his 'arms,' under the providence of God, were 'gilded' with the insignia of office, and he was *thence* enabled to stand to his father's famishing house in the relation of a bountiful provider, a kind pastor, and a powerful protector.

25. *Even by the God of thy father.* Rather, 'Even from the God of thy father.' The design is to designate the source from whence the accumulated blessings of Joseph were to flow. The patriarch would have them traced up to their fountain-head in the abounding goodness of the God of heaven and earth.—¶ *Who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above*; i. e. with the rain and dew distilling from the clouds of heaven and rendering thy land fruitful, called Ezek. 24. 26, 'Showers of blessing.' So Deut. 33. 13, 'And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon.' Chal. 'Blessings of the dew which descendeth from heaven above, and which ascend out of the depths of the earth beneath.' When God

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, 'unto the utmost bound of the ever-

y Deut. 33. 15. Hab. 3. 6.

destroyed the old world, the windows of heaven were opened to pour down incessant showers of rain for its destruction, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, that the waters from below calling to the waters above, might leave no hope of escape for guilty mortals. But when blessings were promised to Joseph, he was assured that the Lord would open the windows of heaven to pour down the rain in its season, in his land, and that it should be refreshed and fructified by springs issuing from the bowels of the earth, which is the import of the phrase, 'the deep that lieth under.' The earth shall rise up against the wicked, and the heavens shall reveal their iniquity; but heaven and earth, and the waters below the earth shall combine, under the control of divine providence, to furnish blessings to God's people. It may indeed be said that the blessings here promised are not the best of blessings; that they were only such as God often bestows on the objects of his displeasure. But the blessings of the present life are delightful when viewed as expressions of the favor of God, and the promise of such blessings might be very useful to the family of Joseph, as a means of counteracting the temptations of prosperity in Egypt, especially the prospects of grandeur arising from their connexion with the house of Potipherah, priest of On. They might have hoped to be princes in Egypt, if they had separated their interests from the family of Jacob; but they had a surer prospect, even of temporal prosperity from the promise of the God of their fathers.—¶ *Blessings of the breast and of the womb.* That is, of a

lasting hills; \* they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the

crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

z Deut. 33. 16.

numerous posterity, the opposite of which is 'a miscarrying womb and dry breasts,' spoken of by the prophet, Hos. 9. 14.

26. *The blessings of thy father have prevailed, &c.* Or, Heb. 'The blessings of thy father are strong upon (i. e. in addition to) the blessings of my progenitors.' This is the more genuine force of the preposition rendered 'above.' The meaning probably is, that the blessings of Jacob when superadded to those of his forefathers formed, as it were, a blessing cumulative that made it emphatically *strong* and *prevalent*. It was not the blessing of a single individual, but the united blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all lighting together upon the head of Joseph. Thus the Chal. 'The blessings of thy father shall be added upon the blessings wherewith my fathers blessed me.'—¶ *Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.* It is difficult in the multiplicity of senses given to these words, to determine which is the true. Some take the original phrase to be equivalent to 'the utmost limit of the duration of the everlasting hills;' implying the perpetuity of these blessings; that their continuance should run parallel with that of the earth itself. Gr. 'With the blessings of the eternal hills.' Perhaps a different rendering of the original will give a still more accurate view of the meaning. The Heb. *רָאָה* *taavah* rendered *utmost bound* usually signifies *desire* or *desirable things*. In this sense it may be a continuation of the blessings recited in the former verse—'unto the desire (i. e. the desired products) of the everlasting hills.' Moses

himself leads us to this sense, when in blessing the tribes of Israel Deut. 33. 15, he invokes for Joseph substantially the same blessings that Jacob did. After having spoken of the precious things of heaven, and of the deep that coucheth beneath, of the precious things brought forth by the sun, and of the precious things put forth by the moon, he adds, 'the *chief things* of the ancient mountains, and the *precious things* of the lasting hills.' There were many precious fruits brought forth by the mountains of Palestine. When Moses expresses his earnest desire that a rich share of these might be granted to the tribes that sprung from Joseph, he seems to repeat Jacob's blessing in a richer variety of expression.—¶ *On the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren.* Or, 'the Nazarite of his brethren;' the original for 'Nazarite' being derived from *נָזַר* *nazar*, to separate. Joseph may be said to have been 'separated' from his brethren, not in consequence of the Nazarite's vow, for this profession had not yet been instituted, though perhaps prophetically alluded to in these words, but because that God by his providence did separate and set him apart from the rest, and advanced him to decided pre-eminence over them. Accordingly the Gr. renders it, 'upon the head of his brethren over whom he ruled.' Certain it is that the word *נָזַר* *nezer* is used for a *crown* put upon the heads of kings and priests. Ps. 89. 39, 'Thou hast profaned *his crown* (*נָזַר*) by casting it to the ground.' Ps. 132. 18, 'His enemies will I clothe with shame but upon himself shall his *crown* (*נָזַר*) flourish.' The allusion is perhaps to

27 ¶ Benjamin shall *aravin* as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, <sup>b</sup> and at night he shall divide the spoil.

a Judg. 20. 21. 25. Ezek. 22. 25. 27.  
b Numb. 23. 24. Esther 8. 11. Ezek. 39.  
10. Zech. 14. 1, 7.

some kind of *crown, tiara, or head-dress* as an outward badge of Joseph's lordship over the Egyptians and over his brethren. The same phrase Deut. 33. 16. is rendered by the Gr. *δοξασθεις εν αδελφοις glorified among his brethren*; and the Targum of Jonathan gives an equivalent sense, 'The man who was prince and ruler in Egypt, and who shone in the glory of his brethren;' i. e. in the glory and honor which he enjoyed among them.

27. *Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf.* That is, shall tear his prey in pieces. As Judah is likened to a lion, Issachar to a strong ass, Dan to a serpent, and Naphtali to a hind let loose, so Benjamin is here compared to a ravenous wolf, to denote the warlike character of this tribe, their activity, courage, and success in their conflicts with the enemies of Israel. Although the image is not on the whole disparaging, for the Most High himself in allusion to his judgments against his enemies is compared to a leopard and a bear, Hos. 13. 7, 8, yet it probably betokens a degree of fierceness and rapacity, not to say cruelty, which would be a stain upon the memory of this tribe with succeeding generations. This is evinced in the history of the transaction recorded Judg. 19 and 20; in that of Saul, who was of this tribe; and of his descendants, who were so long opposed to the accession of the house of David to the throne.—¶ *In the morning—and at night.* That is, all the day long; denoting their pertinacious addictedness to warlike practices. Some

28 ¶ All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them: every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

have supposed that these expressions pointed to the *early* and *latter* periods of their history as a tribe, which is not improbable. They should continue their rapacity and violence from the morning or commencement of the Jewish state to the night or end.

28. *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel.* This phraseology confirms the remark made above that the blessings of Jacob had respect rather to the twelve tribes than to their heads and founders in the person of his sons. The present also is the first mention which occurs in the sacred writers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Henceforth they are either expressly mentioned or plainly referred to throughout the Scriptures. The heads of these tribes are now with their dying father, hearing from his mouth such a portion of the mind of God respecting the future destinies of their seed, as he thought fit to declare. Should the term 'blessed' be considered as inappropriate in reference to Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, it is still to be remembered apart from the fact that general assertions are often made of a whole body which do not apply to every individual, that they were favored with a part in the inheritance of Jacob. Reuben was not to excel, but he was to have a place and a name in Israel. Simeon and Levi were to be divided and scattered, but still among the chosen seed where their lot could and would be turned into a blessing. Even the reproofs, threatenings, and chastisements which do us good are to be accounted as real ble-



29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: <sup>d</sup> bury me with my fathers <sup>e</sup> in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Ca-

c ch. 15. 15. & 25. 8. d ch. 47. 30. 2 Sam. 19. 37. e ch. 50. 13.

sings which we ought to receive with thankfulness.—¶ *Every one according to his blessing.* As Joseph's interpreting according to the dreams of his fellow-prisoners implies an interpretation corresponding with the fulfilment of the dreams, so here Jacob's blessing his sons 'according to the blessing' of each, signifies that his words were *verified* in the actual accomplishments which took place in regard to every one of them. It was a sublime source of joy to Jacob on his death-bed, that he would leave blessings to all his seed. The greatest evils that Jacob saw in his life were the wicked actions of some of his children. Yet how rich was the mercy of God to himself, as well as to them, that after all that most of them had done to provoke the Lord to anger, he was authorised to *bless* them!

29. *And he charged them, and said, &c.* Jacob had before, Gen. 47. 30, given a charge to Joseph and exacted a solemn promise from him to bury him not in Egypt, but in the land of Canaan, and in the cave of Ephraim the Hittite. Joseph's promise was no doubt in itself sufficient to satisfy the mind of his father. He knew that Joseph was too honest to violate his engagements, too affectionate to neglect a father's dying charge, and too powerful in Egypt to find any great difficulty in performing what he had prom-

naam <sup>f</sup> which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place.

31 (<sup>g</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; <sup>h</sup> there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.)

f ch. 23. 16. g ch. 23. 19. & 25. 9. h ch. 35. 29.

ised. But the good man wished that all his sons should take part in his funeral, and that all of them should know his earnest desire to be buried in Canaan.—¶ *I am to be gathered unto my people.* Heb. נָשָׁפָה *ne-esaph*, *I am gathered*, or rather *I am being gathered*; the present with the import of the future, a very frequent idiom in the Hebrew. On the import of the phrase see Note Gen. 25. 8.—¶ *Bury me*; i. e. entomb me.

30. *In the cave which is in the field of Machpelah.* It cannot be supposed that the sons of Jacob were ignorant of the place where the remains of Abraham were deposited. Why then did Jacob recite thus minutely the situation of the burying-place and the circumstances of the purchase? It was no doubt in order to intimate that he shared the faith of Abraham, who, by buying it, clearly showed that he regarded the possession as a pledge that his seed should one day, according to promise, become the actual inheritors of the land. Jacob undoubtedly loved Rachel with warmer affection than his fathers Abraham or Isaac. Yet it was not his wish to be buried with her, but with his fathers in the sepulchre which they had purchased. He hoped to see Rachel as well as Abraham in heaven. But Abraham had testified his faith in the divine promises by the purchase he had made of the burying-place of Mach-

32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein, was from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons,

he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and <sup>i</sup> was gathered unto his people.

i ver. 29.

pelah, and Jacob would show that he was not lacking in the same pious confidence. His command therefore to his sons was a public profession that he also lived and was now dying in the same faith by which his venerable progenitors had embraced the promise. What was said by Paul of Joseph may with equal propriety be said of Jacob, that 'by faith he gave commandment concerning his bones.'

32. *The purchase of the field, &c.* The transaction between Abraham and the sons of Heth was public and well-known; it was confirmed by the modes used in the country for ascertaining the transference of property. Jacob's sons therefore had no reason to fear that they would meet with any opposition from the people of the land, when they carried their father's body to the place where his forefathers were buried. Both Abraham and Jacob knew of course that the whole land of Canaan was to be theirs, but they claimed no right from that promise to seize upon any part of it as their exclusive property. When they found it proper to secure any spot of ground for themselves, they bargained for it, and paid the price in current money of the merchant. The time was not yet come for possessing the land by the right which the divine grant gave to their posterity.

33. *And when Jacob had made an end, &c.* It would seem that Jacob's decease followed very close upon his utterance of these dying benedictions, and it is somewhat surprising that he should have been able to speak so many and so excellent things, and fin-

ish them almost in the moment of his death. But he was no doubt supernaturally strengthened for the occasion, though it may be supposed that when the unwonted vigor created by the prophetic afflatus subsided, a reaction took place, and nature sunk almost at once under the transition. But it mattered little at what particular hour this solemn event befel the aged saint. Death was no new subject to him; salvation not an untried theme; the grave no strange country; heaven not an unlooked-for home. He had waited for the Angel of the Covenant, who had redeemed him from all evil, and the summons, when it came, found him ready and willing to enter into the eternal presence. His work was done; his last blessings and behests had been pronounced; his last accents of prayer and praise breathed out; and he had now nothing to do but 'to gather up his feet into his bed,' and cheerfully to resign his spirit into the hand of his Father and his God. He was gathered to his people according to his own expectation and his hope. He had lived out fifteen years of his life with Abraham. With his father Isaac he had lived somewhat near a hundred, and seventeen with Joseph in Egypt. But henceforth we contemplate him living in a happier world through endless ages, with Christ which is far better. Let us live by faith, as the patriarchs did, and we also shall be gathered to them when we die. How wretched will be our lot, if we see millions with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and ourselves cast out into outer darkness! But how excellent and extatic will be

## CHAPTER L.

AND Joseph <sup>a</sup>fell upon his father's face, and <sup>b</sup>wept upon him, and kissed him.

a ch. 46. 4. b 2 Kings 13. 14.

our joys, if admitted to those blessed regions, where our fellowship with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and with an innumerable multitude of saints and angels, will make but a small part of our happiness!

## CHAPTER L.

We have reached at length the concluding portion of the patriarchal history. We have followed the progress of Jacob's life through the protracted period of one hundred and forty-seven years, and have seen him meekly and calmly bowing to the universal law which remands our dust to its kindred dust. We are now called to contemplate those tokens of affection and veneration which were evinced for his memory by his surviving family and the people with whom he sojourned. The death of a parent is at all times an event peculiarly affecting. The source of our own life appears to us thereby, as it were, dried up. While our parents live, we seem to have a kind of barrier betwixt us and the grave; but that being removed the destroyer appears advancing upon us with hastier strides. If we look forward, there is nothing interposed for our defence; if backward, our very children are pressing upon our heels and ready to lay their hands upon our eyes. Joseph now felt the full force of these impressions. His father, his guide, his best friend on earth, was now no more numbered among the living. No more was he to behold that venerable countenance; no more to hear those words of truth

2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to <sup>c</sup>embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.

c ver. 26. 2 Chron. 16. 14. Matt. 26. 12. Mark 14. 8. & 16. 1. Luke 24. 1. John 12. 7. & 19. 39. 40.

and wisdom which had so often proceeded from his lips. But though he could not preserve his father alive, or redeem him from death, yet he will spare no trouble or expense in obeying his dying charge. The highest respect we can pay to the dead is to fulfil their desires expressed by them during their lives. The sequel informs us of the exemplary conduct of Joseph in this particular.

1. *Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept, &c.* 'Joseph,' said God to Jacob at Beersheba, 'shall put his hands upon thine eyes.' This no doubt Joseph had done though we are not expressly informed of it; and now when he saw that his father was a lifeless carcase, he gave way to the excess of his grief, embracing and kissing it with passionate endearment. Hard indeed must be our hearts if we do not mourn when our fathers die; but let us beware of enhancing our sorrows on that occasion by the recollection of any thing unfilial or ungrateful in our deportment towards them whilst alive. Let us beware of thus laying up for ourselves materials of grief which will not admit of comfort. Joseph could never have forgiven himself had he been conscious of embittering his father's days, by despising his counsels or disregarding his welfare in his lifetime. We are not told what Reuben or Simeon or Levi felt on the present occasion. Their sensibilities were not so strong as those of Joseph, but their self-reflections must have been bitter. Joseph's tears were at-

3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalm-

ed: and the Egyptians <sup>4</sup> mourned for him three score and ten days.

d Numb. 20, 29. Deut. 34. 8.

tended with secret consolation. Their griefs were tinctured with the most painful and tormenting recollections. Yet it may be hoped that theirs was a sadness of the countenance by which the heart was made bitter.

2. *Joseph commanded his servants the physicians, &c.* Heb. רפאים *ropheim*, from רפא *to heal*. Gr. *evra-phiasas embalmers*. The business of embalming was performed by those who were physicians by profession. The process of embalming among the ancient Egyptians is thus described by Herodotus, b. ii., c. 86--8, 'The body was given to the embalmers, who first took out the brains and entrails and washed them in palm wine impregnated with strong astringent drugs; after which they began to anoint the body with the oil of cedar, myrrh, cinnamon, and cassia; and this lasted thirty days. They next put it into a solution of nitre (saltpetre) for forty days longer, so that they allowed seventy days to complete the embalming; after which they bound it up in swathes of linen besmeared with gum. Being then able to resist putrefaction, it was delivered to the relatives, inclosed in a wooden or paper case somewhat resembling a coffin, and laid in the catacomb or grave belonging to the family, where it was placed in an upright posture against the wall.' The Jewish method was not dissimilar. When the principle of life was extinguished, and the eyes were closed in death, the first funeral office among the Jews was the ablution of the corpse in a warm infusion of camomile flowers and dried roses. See Acts 9. 37. After washing the corpse they embalmed it, by laying all around it a large quantity of costly

spices and aromatic drugs, in order to imbibe and absorb the humors, and by their inherent virtues to preserve it as long as possible from putrefaction and decay. Thus Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight, to perform the customary office to the deceased Savior. This embalming was usually repeated for several days together that the drugs and spices thus applied might have all their efficacy in the exsiccation of the moisture and the future conservation of the body. They then swathed the corpse in linen rolls or bandages, closely enfolding and enwrapping it in that bed of aromatic drugs in which they had surrounded it. The Egyptian custom of embalming the dead arose from the doctrine of their religion, that after a period of three thousand years' migration through the bodies of various animals, the soul again returned to the original body it had at first occupied, and that provided the body remained unmutated, the spirit entered its former habitation, and both, thus reunited, were immediately made happy; but if, on the contrary, the body was destroyed or defaced, the soul, as well as any remnants of the body which might remain, shrank at once into annihilation.

3. *Forty days were fulfilled for him.* That is, forty days were occupied in the process of embalming the body. Considerable time was necessary for the drugs to operate, so as to produce the designed effect upon the body, to preserve it from corruption. The seventy-five days mourning of the Egyptians, mentioned in the ensuing clause of the verse, is to be understood as including the forty days of embalming.

4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto \* the house of Pharaoh saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

5 ' My father made me swear

e Esther 4. 2. f ch. 47. 29.

The whole is spoken of together as a mourning period. This long mourning for the death of Jacob was a great honor done to the venerable patriarch, chiefly for the sake of his son. All the Egyptians saw how dear Jacob was to their lord, and thought they could not pay a more respectable token of respect to him than by mourning for his father. When good and great men die it is proper that the general heart of the community should feel the stroke of providence. But when we wear mourning apparel, our clothes will rise up in judgment against us, if we do not call to mind our own mortal condition, and think seriously of our own dissolution. Our bodies are not made of brass, any more than the bodies of those whom we profess to deplore. A loud voice comes from their graves, proclaiming that to-morrow, or when a few more years are gone, we must be with them. Shall we not then prepare for the decease which we must so soon accomplish? Was so much time, and pains, and expense employed on a dead body, to preserve it from the natural consequences of death? What excuse is left for us if we bestow not as much time and care to secure ourselves against the terrible consequences of death to both body and soul? Yet are there not those who act as if they thought that less time was necessary to prepare for heaven, than the Egyptian physicians thought necessary for seasoning the dead body of a man, to preserve it from putrefaction?

saying, Lo, I die: in my grave \* which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

g 2 Chron. 16. 14. Isaiah 22. 16. Mat. 27. 60.

4. *Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, &c.* Joseph was lord of all the land of Egypt, and yet he was Pharaoh's servant; he did not forget his condition amidst all his grandeur. He certainly had sufficient credit with his sovereign to obtain permission to bury his father in Canaan without solicitation from other favorites. Yet he disdains not to use the interest of other servants in his favor; and for this it is probable he had a special reason on the present occasion. Princes in the East have often discovered an irreconcilable aversion to any thing that wears a gloomy appearance, or that puts them in mind of death. We learn from the book of Esther, ch. 4.2, that it was in her time the custom that 'none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth,' for which reason Mordecai was excluded from the royal presence so long as he wore mourning apparel. The Father of mercies, on the other hand, looks with a compassionate eye on mourners when they come into his presence. But a wise man will be cautious of obtruding his sorrows on his fellow-men, without knowing their dispositions.—¶ *Unto the house of Pharaoh.* Gr. *dyvartas potentates, chief officers*, or in other words, to the principal men of his court. The same word in the Greek of the New Testament, Acts 8. 27, is rendered *eunuch*. See Note on Gen. 37. 36.

5. *My father made me swear.* Heb. *השביעני hishbiani, swear me.* On

6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

7 ¶ And Joseph went up to

bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

this phraseology see Note on Gen. 24. 3. The Egyptians were very jealous of the honor of their country, which they esteemed 'the glory of all lands.' They might have thought that Joseph, who had received such honors in their land, did not discover a grateful sense of their favors, if he had carried his father's body to be buried in another land, without giving a good reason for it. The old man had himself moreover been treated with great generosity by Pharaoh. Did his son grudge his body to that land which had supplied his numerous family with food, when he could find none in the land of Canaan? Joseph wished to obviate any such reflections, and therefore produced reasons for his request, which he knew would satisfy the king's mind, and the minds of his people. Jacob had digged a grave for himself in the land of Canaan, and in that place of it, where his father, and a part of his own family, had been buried. He had not only expressed a strong desire to be buried in that grave, but he had brought his son Joseph under the sacred engagement of an oath, to do what he desired. 'Now therefore,' says Joseph, 'let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.' He was sure the reasons given would not only procure the king's consent to his proposal, but would banish every suspicion of disrespect in making it. He would not be accounted deficient in his affection to his king and benefactor, because he was a dutiful son who paid a regard to his father's dying wishes. He would not be esteemed a disloyal subject, because

he desired leave to perform a solemn oath. On the contrary, he would have lost all credit with the Egyptians themselves, if he had acted otherwise than he did. Nor would his father be thought ungrateful to a king and nation from whom he had received such favors, when he desired to lie in death with his forefathers, in the grave which he had provided for himself.—¶ *Which I have digged.* That is, procured to be dug, or rather *hewed out*. It may seem strange that Jacob should have been in such haste to dig a grave for himself, more than seventeen years before he died. But it seems from other passages to have been customary for men in those early times to have places of sepulture prepared some time before their death. Comp. 2 Chron. 16. 14, and Mat. 27. 60. It is possible that Job may allude to something of this nature when he says ch. 17. 1, 'The graves are ready for me.' But apart from this, it is not unlikely that Jacob did not expect to live so long as he did. His heart almost died within him when he was made to believe that Joseph was torn in pieces by wild beasts; and although he had met with fewer evils in the course of his life than he did, yet he might have dug a grave for himself without the imputation of folly or melancholy. The most healthy and prosperous ought to remember that they will one day need a grave; and it will not impair our cheerfulness to think of our latter end, if we entertain the well-grounded hope of happiness beyond the grave.

6. *Pharaoh said, Go up, &c.* The answer of Pharaoh shows at least a

8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's

house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

great reverence for the solemnity of an oath. He puts his compliance with Joseph's request especially upon this, that his father had 'made him swear.' An oath was a solemn thing and must not be taken in vain. Those Christians who disregard the obligations of an oath are worse than multitudes of the heathen. The foundations of human society are subverted when oaths are treated with contempt.

7. *And Joseph went up, &c.* Although all Egypt may be said to have done Jacob honor at his death, and his funeral ceremonies were magnificent beyond a parallel in history, except perhaps in the case of Alexander the Great, yet there is no doubt that it was not in consequence of any wish on his part. He simply desired to be carried by his sons and buried in the land of promise. His desire was that of faith, and not of vain-glorious display. But God sometimes so orders events that those who are least covetous of worldly distinction shall either in their lives or at their death be crowned with a large share of it. When men, like Solomon, seek that supremely which God approves, he not unfrequently adds to it the inferior honors to which they are indifferent. The eclat which now marked the funeral obsequies of Jacob was principally for Joseph's sake, and it shows in what esteem he was held in Egypt. Whatever modern cavillers have said to throw discredit upon his conduct as prime minister in the court of Pharaoh, the facts recorded make it clear, that he was considered at the time as one of the greatest benefactors to the country.—¶ *With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh.* That is, a very large proportion of

them. Thus Mat. 3. 5, 'There went out to him Jerusalem and *all Judea*;' by which is meant a great many from all quarters.—¶ *All the elders of the land.* The counsellors, senators, court-officers. See Note on Gen. 24. 2. So great a cavalcade attending Jacob to his long home, through a part of two different countries, would spread the fame of the good man, and revive the remembrance of him in the land of Canaan. And it was much for the interest of religion that his name should be known. In his life he had eminently displayed the virtues by which religion is recommended. Let us endeavor always so to demean ourselves that those who remember our names when we are in the dust, may find no pretence to speak evil of us, or of the ways of God on our account.

8. *All the house of Joseph, and his brethren, &c.* Joseph's brethren no doubt cheerfully concurred with him in doing honor to their father and in obeying his last injunction. They had been fully persuaded that he did them no injustice in valuing and loving Joseph so much more than themselves. The grief with which they were penetrated for the loss of their best friend would be enhanced by the bitter reflection that they had brought accumulated sorrows upon his grey hairs, but as they could assure themselves of his forgiveness, and hope for that of heaven, they would find comfort in their mourning. They left their little ones and their flocks and herds in Egypt, with the requisite number of women and servants to take care of them, because the time determined by God for their final departure from that country had not yet arrived by about two hundred years.

9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

10 And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they

<sup>h</sup> mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: <sup>i</sup> and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Sam. 1. 17. Acts 8. 2. <sup>i</sup> 1 Sam. 31. 13. Job. 2. 13.

9. *There went up with him both chariots and horsemen.* Heb. רֶכֶב *rekeb*, chariot, or rather chariotry, col. sing. for plur. a great multitude of chariots. In like manner Ps. 68. 17, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand.' Heb. רֶכֶב *chariotry*. Jacob, who was willing to be a servant in Syria, and 'for a wife kept sheep,' surely never affected splendor in his life-time. Yet he is honored with a funeral as splendid as if he had been a king. A commentator in remarking upon it says, 'The mourning retinue was composed of an itinerant national multitude, which swelled like a flood and moved like a river.' Such honors to a man after his death can be of no value to him. It was the happiness of Jacob that his dead body was under the protection of his God, to be raised again in glory and incorruption at the last day, Luke 20. 37. Yet the affectionate heart of Joseph was soothed by the sight of so large a concourse of the first men of Egypt. His grief was mitigated by the respect paid to his father's memory, and to himself; and may it not be hoped that the discourse of some of the company was turned, by the occasion, to the character of Jacob, and to those marvellous events which had procured him so much consideration from the king of Egypt? If so, notwithstanding that Calvin, in the sternness of his critical judgment, thinks there was even on the part of Joseph an undue display of the tokens of grief on this occasion, may it not be supposed that the cause of true religion was promoted by the ceremonies

attendant upon the funeral?—וַיְהִי כִּי הָיָה אֶתְּמֹלֶת הַמִּוֹחָז הַכָּבֵד מְאֹד *It was a very great company.* Heb. הַמִּוֹחָז הַכָּבֵד מְאֹד *hammahaneh kabad meod*, the encamping host was very heavy. Thus the like phrase 1 Kings, 3. 9, (Heb.) 'a mighty people' is expounded in 2 Chron. 1. 10, 'a great people.'

10. *They came to the threshing-floor of Atad.* Heb. גֹּרֵן הָאֵתָד *goren ha-atad*. As the latter word in the original has the definite article prefixed 'the Atad,' and as it properly signifies a thorn, briar, or bramble bush, it is questionable whether the correct rendering be not, 'they came to the plain or area of the thorn bush:' i. e. to a once open champaign tract now grown over, or it may be, compassed about and hedged in, with thorns. It was undoubtedly an extensive level plat or ground, like the spots which were prepared for threshing-floors, or it may have been a place formerly used for that purpose. At any rate it was a spot sufficiently large for a camping ground for the whole host. While the main body of the cavalcade remained here, the remains of Jacob were probably conveyed by a select company to the place of sepulture. The threshing-floor of Atad might have been a more proper place than the field of Ephron, for this solemn mourning in Canaan. What if the inhabitants of the country where a part of Jacob's property lay, had looked with an evil eye on such a large company of men continuing seven days amongst them? They would have had a better pretence for supposing that some bad design was in agitation, than Joseph had to



11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:

13 For <sup>k</sup>his sons carried him

<sup>k</sup> ch. 49. 29, 30. Acts 7. 16.

impute bad designs to his brethren, when they came to Egypt to buy corn. In every part of his conduct Joseph demeaned himself wisely. While his heart was pierced with sorrow, he did not forget those rules by which at other times he acted to prevent mischief.

11. *And when the inhabitants of the land, &c.* The Canaanites were evidently astonished at the expression of the overwhelming sorrow evinced by the Egyptians and that for seven days together. Surely, they would say, this man must have been greatly revered or greatly beloved in Egypt. Probably never before had they witnessed such cries of grief uttered, never so many tears shed, for a single man. Their emotions on the occasion prompted a significant name for the place, by which it was afterwards known. They called it 'Abel-mizraim,' *the mourning of the Egyptians*. It may be well for us to bear in mind, when we mourn to an uncommon degree for the death of beloved friends, that our deportment will probably be observed. Let us consider whether we are honoring our profession by our sighs and tears.—

¶ Which is beyond Jordan. Heb. בעבר הירדן *beaber ha-yarden*. Most interpreters, following Jerome who has

into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

14 ¶ And Joseph returned into Egypt, he and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

1 ch. 23. 16.

'trans Jordanem,' render this 'beyond Jordan,' which is adopted in our Eng. version. If this be correct, it must be understood relatively to the place where Moses wrote, which is presumed to have been in the wilderness east of the Jordan. Consequently the threshing-floor in question must have been on the west of the Jordan. Jerome accordingly remarks 'that there was in his time a place two or three miles from Jericho called *Bethagla* (בֵּית אֶגְלָה *beth-aglah*) i. e. *place of circuiting*, or where persons walked round in a circuit after the manner of mourners. Rosenmuller, however, observes that the original בעבר *beaber* may as properly be rendered 'in trajectory,' *at the passage* of the Jordan, without defining on which side of the river the place was situated. But in either case, the inference is, that the route taken from Egypt was not the direct route through the land of the Philistines, but the more circuitous one through a part of Arabia, and the land of Moab and Ammon. This, Leclerc suggests, may have been owing to the apprehended hostility of the Philistines or the Edomites, or both.

14. *And Joseph returned, &c.* As the time for the fulfilment of the promise respecting the egress of the

15 ¶ And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, " they said, Joseph will

m Job 15. 21, 22.

children of Israel from Egypt had not yet arrived, they now returned to the place of their former dwelling to wait the unfolding of the plans of providence. Our duties to deceased friends and relatives terminate at their graves. We return from their funerals to reflect upon the time when the same mournful offices will be performed for us that we have performed for them, and to enter upon that work which we yet have the power to do for the living.

15. *And when Joseph's brethren saw, &c.* The heart of man is by nature vindictive. It was a just observation of Saul to David, 1 Sam. 24. 19, 'If a man find his enemy will he let him go well away?' Hence when men have injured any person, they hate him, because they think he must of necessity have become their enemy; and if they are within the reach of his person, they fear him, because they conclude that he will avail himself of any favorable opportunity to revenge himself upon them. It was thus with Joseph's brethren. Their thoughts being no longer occupied with the pomp and ceremonies of the funeral, are naturally turned into another channel. Busy conscience again begins to work, and to fill them with forebodings of vengeance from the hand of Joseph. Though his veneration for his father may have restrained his hands till this time, yet now doubtless he will review the past and decide that their sin is too great to be forgiven. These unreasonable suspicions were perhaps infused into their minds from what they felt in themselves. For a far less injury than they had done to Joseph,

36\*

peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a messenger

some of them had destroyed a whole city. It is probable too that this apprehension was strengthened by the recollection of what their father Jacob had suffered from the vindictive spirit of Esau; 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, and then I will kill my brother Jacob.' But they knew that Esau relented before his father's death. Why did they suppose Joseph to be a second Esau, or worse than Esau? Surely his former behavior might have banished all such thoughts from their minds. But their present dejection of spirits at their father's death disposed them to entertain dismal thoughts, which would not probably have been admitted at another time. Their affliction and fear brought their sin again to remembrance, and renewed their apprehensions of vengeance. 'He will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.' The light of conscience tells us that we deserve to be requited according to our works; and it is so common for men to requite their enemies in this way, as soon as it is in their power, that it is difficult for us to believe that any will act otherwise, when they can do it with safety to themselves. But however rare, the world yet affords instances of men who love their enemies and bless those that curse them. We do great injustice to a true Christian, if we think him no better than other men. Though there is indeed flesh as well as spirit within him, yet he has learnt to render to no man evil for evil.

16. *They sent a messenger unto Joseph.* Heb. יִצְרָו אֶל יוֹסֵף *yetzavuu*

unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and

their sin; <sup>a</sup> for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of <sup>o</sup> the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

n Prov. 28. 13. o ch. 49. 25.

*el Yoseph, they commanded to Joseph.* The original has nothing respecting 'messengers,' except by implication. The various versions for the most part understand that messengers were employed, but we are inclined to believe from v. 17, that they addressed him themselves, in a personal interview. The word 'command,' in the sacred idiom, often signifies efficaciously to procure any thing to be done. Thus, Ps. 42. 8, 'The Lord will *command* his loving kindness.' Lev. 25. 21, 'He will *command* his blessing;' i. e. he will *effectually secure* the bestowment of his blessings. So in the present case the legitimate meaning we suppose to be that they *commanded* Joseph by laying upon him the *command* of their father. This is upon the supposition that such a command was actually given by Jacob, which we cannot deny without questioning the veracity of his sons; yet the previous history gives us no account of this alleged injunction; and it must be admitted as strange in the extreme that Jacob should not have given Joseph this charge in person, instead of communicating it to him by proxy. Had he supposed that Joseph retained any secret resentments, he would certainly have endeavored to extinguish them, or to guard against their consequences in one of his last interviews with him. He spake twice to him, and once to all the brethren, about his burial in the land of Canaan. The *conciliation* of their minds to one an-

other, had any estrangement been suspected, would have been a more important subject for his last charge. It is to be feared, therefore, that the ten brethren took an unwarrantable liberty with their father's name, and uttered to Joseph a *forged* injunction. But a guilty conscience has often urged sinners to use still more unjustifiable artifices. The plea they urged, however, was in itself well adapted to compass the end proposed. They plead the dying request of their father. What more cogent argument could be used with a pious mind than this? The dying request of a friend is sacred; and how much more that of a parent, a parent of such pre-eminent worth as Jacob!

17. *Forgive, I pray thee, the trespass, &c.* They make an ingenuous confession of their offence. They could not do less if they expected to be forgiven, for it was too well known to be concealed. Although the words of the petition were probably not the words of Jacob, yet Joseph knew that they expressed what would have been his father's mind had he left such a command as his brethren alleged. And undoubtedly such was his regard for his father, that he would have forgiven his brethren for his sake, even had nobler motives been wanting. But his forgiveness would not have been circumscribed within the limits of his father's life. As we have already seen in reference to another matter, his father's will was sacred with him when the old man was not alive to

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face :

p ch. 37. 7, 10.

thank him. But his brethren unite their own most humble and earnest entreaties with the alleged command of their father. However strong may be our propensity to revenge, the entreaties of a penitent offender will disarm us. It is scarcely possible for a man to revenge himself on one who lies prostrate at his feet. But there is a peculiar delicacy in the address which they make to Joseph. In speaking to him of Jacob, they do not designate him as *their* father, but as *his*; '*Thy father did command.*' This by appealing to his filial reverence, would bring the request home with more power to his heart. But there was still another motive to weigh with Joseph. His brethren sought his forgiveness on the ground also that they were 'the servants of the God of his father;' and however much he felt bound to do for his father, he felt constrained to do incomparably more for his father's God. Joseph himself was a servant of God, and was therefore bound to forgive his fellow-servants. *They* had indeed in some instances been very unprofitable to God, but they served a God who pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin; and why should not he? He himself needed remission. Although an eminently holy man, yet the debt for which he needed and received forgiveness from God, was, to that debt which his brethren owed him, as ten thousand talents to two hundred pence.—¶ *Joseph wept when they spake unto him.* Considering how long his brethren had forbore to humble themselves aright, Joseph might well have upbraided them, both with their former cruelty, and their subsequent impenitence; or he might

and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

have imposed conditions upon them, as Solomon afterwards did on Shimei; or he might have pardoned them in kind and condescending terms. But the way in which he expressed his forgiveness was more eloquent and convincing than any words which human ingenuity could ever have devised; '*Joseph wept when they spake unto him.*' Had he been of a haughty spirit, or had he not fully understood their motives, he would have been angry with his brethren instead of weeping with them. He had already from his heart forgiven them, and had given them abundant proofs that their conduct was erased from his memory. Did they imagine that he was for seventeen years playing the part of a hypocrite, with words of kindness in his mouth, with gifts in his hand, and malignity in his heart? Were vile suspicions of his sincerity all the return they made to him? But the truth doubtless is, that Joseph imputed their appeal, not to ingratitude, or to any habitual disbelief of his sincerity, but to the grief and fear occasioned by the new situation in which their father's death had placed them. Appreciating their feelings, the softer emotions operated on his heart and moved him to tears.

18. *His brethren also went and fell down before his face.* This was the final and complete fulfilment of the dreams of Joseph announcing the subjection and homage of his brethren. It was none the less striking because it occurred in the midst of a scene of deep and sympathetic tenderness. They had been effectually subdued and humbled, and we cannot imagine a greater contrast than that which we

19 And Joseph said unto them,  
 ' Fear not : ' for *am* I in the place  
 of God ?

20 \* But as for you, ye thought

q ch. 45. 5. r Deut. 32. 35. Job. 34. 29.  
 Rom. 12. 19. Heb. 10. 30. 2 Kings 5. 7.  
 s Ps. 56. 5. Isai. 10. 7.

witness between the men indignantly listening to the relation of Joseph's dreams, and the men unconsciously bringing them to pass. Thus God with infinite ease abases the high, and exalts the lowly. Perhaps they would have behaved in a manner still more agreeable to Joseph, had they placed all that confidence in him to which his generosity entitled him; yet we are pleased to see them act like men disposed to accept the punishment of their iniquity and to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

19. *Fear not : for am I in the place of God?* These words seem to signify that God is to be regarded as the great avenger of sin, and that Joseph was not so presumptuous as to put himself in the place of him to whom vengeance belongeth. He was indeed a magistrate to whom the sword was given to execute vengeance upon evil doers. Yet he could not execute vengeance as a magistrate upon his brethren for an offence committed against himself long before he was raised to that high station. The invitation which he gave them to come and dwell with him was an implied promise that he would not use his authority against them, but treat them as if they had never offended him. 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' What can be more presumptuous than for a man to usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth? Yet this prerogative is usurped by every man who gives indulgence to an unforgiving spirit.—The above interpretation gives

evil against me; but \* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

t ch. 45. 5, 7 Acts 3. 13, 14, 15.

a clear and consistent sense, yet there is no doubt that the original הִתְחַתְּתִי אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים *ha-thahath Elohim ani*, will admit of the rendering *Am I under God?* q. d. 'Am I or am I not under God? Am I not as much his subject as you are? If so, how can I punish you for that which he hath turned into good? It is plain that his providence has sent me by your agency to Egypt, not to destroy you, but to save your lives. How then shall I make use of the advantages afforded me to execute a mean vengeance for injuries done to myself? Surely I should thus incur the guilt of fighting against God, and of abusing his great goodness to the service of sin.' Let us consider then, when strongly solicited to avenge our selves, whether we are or are not under God. When we presumptuously violate his law by executing that vengeance which he forbears or prohibits, do we not in effect say that we are above him?

20. *Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.* In using this language Joseph by no means intended to upbraid his brethren with what they had thought against him. His mention of their intentions was only designed as a contrast to the gracious intentions of God. In what he said on the same subject on a former occasion Gen. 45. 5, 7, he made no allusion at all to the wickedness of their thoughts. At that time they were less able to bear it. But before their father's death they had time to be assured that he could mean nothing that was unkind. After

21 Now therefore fear ye not :  
I will nourish you, and your

v ch. 47. 12. Matt. 5. 44.

so many proofs that he still loved them, notwithstanding all that they had done and intended, they might bear the hint that he now gave them. All that he could intend by it was, to acknowledge what was too plain to be denied, and to say in substance that what he had told them seventeen years before, he still adhered to, and that the same considerations which induced him to pass by their offence then, induced him to do it still. He saw that God's thoughts were thoughts of mercy and kindness both to himself and his brethren; and under this conviction, how could he be guilty of so great a wickedness as to destroy or injure those very persons whom God had exalted him to preserve and protect? Let us think of Joseph's words when we are called to suffer injurious treatment from others. Whatever our Heavenly Father permits to befall us, he intends it for good, if we love him. And shall we not bless him for his kind intentions? But if we bless God, do not let us curse the instruments whom he employs for our good. They may have thought evil against us, but that evil will not light upon us. It will rather recoil upon themselves. They deserve our pity. The displeasure of God will be sufficiently heavy for them without our displeasure. Is it not enough for us that all the evil should be theirs, and all the good our own? Let us not then by indulging a vindictive spirit take effectual measures to rob ourselves of all the good that we might derive from what is evil to them, and share with them in their sin and its consequences. —¶ *God meant it—as it is this day, to save much people alive.* The Egyptians were saved alive; the house of

little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

Jacob was saved alive; the seed that was to spring from Joseph was preserved from extinction in the loins of their progenitors. The wisdom and goodness of divine providence in overruling the bad intentions of Joseph's brethren to merciful ends were clearly illustrated. Although their sin was not lessened by its happy consequences, yet these consequences were more than sufficient to preserve the mind of Joseph from irritation, and to set the minds of his brethren at rest from any fears of his resentment. Their business therefore was not to give way to groundless apprehensions, but to humble themselves for their iniquity, and to adore the kind providence which brought so much good to themselves, to their children, and to the world out of their sins.

21. *Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, &c.* Again Joseph intreated and exhorted them to confide in his love, and to banish their fears. He was vexed to see them unhappy. He wished them to be as happy as himself, and at the same time exempted from those cares which were inseparable from his station. Do we say that we forgive those who have offended us? We say well; but how do we verify our words? Are we ready to perform offices of kindness and charity to them as we have opportunity; to comfort them when oppressed with grief; to supply their necessities when in want; to assist them in whatever they need? Such were the ways by which Joseph assured his brethren of his good will to them after their offences. He was not, like many, forward in promising and slow in performing. He was equally prompt in

22 ¶ And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's

house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

both.—¶ *He comforted them and spake kindly unto them.* Heb. ידבר על לבם *yedabber al libbam, spake to their heart.* On the force of this expression see Note on Gen. 34. 3. Although words without deeds are but wind, yet words of kindness to which deeds correspond are precious to those who are prepared to value them; and such were Joseph's on this occasion.

22. *Joseph dwelt in Egypt, &c.* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange land, dwelling in tabernacles. The life of Joseph was very different from that of his fathers. He lived in a sumptuous palace, honored by the whole nation of Egypt, and by the surrounding nations, as the wisest and one of the greatest of men. Yet he lived in his palace by faith, as his fathers had done in their tents. Amidst all his honor and affluence, he valued the promise of Canaan more than all the treasures of Egypt, and looked forward with joyful anticipation to the time when in the persons of his seed he should become the actual possessor of that rich inheritance. Yet at present 'he dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house.' Why was this? Not surely for the sake of the honors and pleasures which the court of Egypt could afford him, but rather because it was the will of God that he should dwell there to be a father to Pharaoh, and to be the shepherd of Israel. The people of Canaan were no doubt by this time multiplied to such a degree that the family of Jacob would not easily have found a place to live together a pastoral life as one great family. The report that the whole land was expected by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the inheritance of their

seed, was perhaps now current in Canaan, and this would natural expose them to the jealousy and hostility of the original inhabitants. And as the iniquities of these heathen tribes were not yet full, any attempt to take forcible possession of the country would have been premature. But whatever were the motives which determined the children of Israel to prolong their residence in Egypt, we know that their abode in that land had been fore-appointed for them by God, for his own glory and for their good. It was not hid from Abraham when God promised him the land of Canaan for his seed, that he and his seed should be sojourners in a land that was not theirs, for the space of four hundred and fifty years. The one half of this time they abode in Canaan as in a strange land, the other half of it in the land of Egypt. This prediction they no doubt regarded as equivalent to a divine direction for their longer stay.—¶ *He and his father's house;* of which he had now become the head, for Reuben had forfeited his birthright. When heads of families die, it is happy if some member of the family remains who is able and willing to discharge the duties of a head to a headless house. The elder brother, if of proper age, ought to be a father to the younger, and the younger ought to pay him that deference which is due to his age, his qualifications, and his endeavors to promote the common welfare.—¶ *Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.* He was shorter lived than his father Jacob, whose days had been fewer than those of any of his progenitors from the days of Adam. But if men's lives were to be measured by their good works and usefulness, Joseph

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